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Consumer behaviour of young Polish singles — selected issues

Zachowania konsumenckie polskich młodych singli — wybrane zagadnienia

This article is a research exercise and provides some insight into the consequences of singlehood as an alternative form of family life among young people living in Poland, in the sphere of consumption. Its primary goal is to identify consumer behaviours of young people living alone. The study consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical. On the basis of a critical analysis of literature, the first one attempts to explain the notion of single. Subsequently, it sheds light on the scale of singlehood in Poland and in the world. The second, major part is empirical. The basis for conclusions is provided by the research material collected in the survey conducted in a sample of 826 young singles. This article seeks to provide some insight into consumer behaviour of young Polish singles based on the results of my research. The findings confirm that the young singles interviewed can be considered very active consumers. Over 3/4 of them like shopping or like it very much and do it a few times a week. The greatest pleasure is derived from shopping by singles in the 24–29 age group, mostly women with higher education and most commonly living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants. The majority of young singles prefer shopping at large shopping centres, with bazaars, open-air markets and small corner shops being less popular. While shopping for food, young singles attach considerable importance to freshness, quality, origin and promotion of food products, whereas they care less about brand, advertising and complementarity of the offer. In the case of durable goods, they attach the greatest importance to quality, price, brand and utility of products, with other determinants (fashion, promotions, shopping location, product packaging, advertising, the possibility of standing out) being less significant.

Keywords

single, young people, consumer behaviour, consumption

Artykuł ma charakter badawczy i dotyczy uchwycenia konsekwencji zjawiska singlizacji społeczeństwa jako alternatywnej formy życia rodzinnego wśród osób młodych żyjących w Polsce, w sferze konsumpcji. Jego podstawowym celem jest uchwycenie zachowań konsumenckich polskich młodych singli na podstawie wyników badań własnych. Opracowanie składa się z dwóch części: teoretycznej i empirycznej. W pierwszej z nich na podstawie krytycznej analizy literatury podjęto się próby wyjaśnienia pojęcia „singiel”, a następnie naświetlono skalę zjawiska singlizacji w Polsce i na świecie. Natomiast druga, zasadnicza część pracy ma charakter empiryczny. Podstawę wnioskowania stanowi materiał badawczy pozyskany dzięki przeprowadzonym przez autora badaniom na próbie 826 osób młodych żyjących w pojedynkę. Wyniki badania potwierdzają, że badanych młodych singli można uznać za bardzo aktywnych konsumentów. Ponad 3/4 z nich lubi bądź bardzo lubi robić zakupy i dokonuje ich kilka razy w tygodniu. Największą przyjemność zakupy sprawiają singlom z grupy wiekowej 24–29 lat, przeważnie kobietom, z wyższym wykształceniem i zamieszkającym najczęściej w miastach powyżej 500 tys. mieszkańców. Większość młodych singli preferuje robienie zakupów w dużych centrach handlowych, natomiast mniejszą popularnością cieszą się bazy, targowiska i małe sklepy osiedlowe. Przy zakupie produktów żywnościowych młodzi single dużą wagę przywiązują do świeżości, jakości, pochodzenia produktu i promocji, natomiast są mniej wrażliwi na markę produktu, reklamę oraz komplementarność oferty. Z kolei w przypadku zakupu dóbr trwałego użytku badani single największą wagę przywiązują do jakości, ceny, marki i walorów użytkowych produktu, natomiast pozostałe determinanty (moda, promocje, miejsce zakupu, opakowanie produktu, reklama, możliwość wyróżnienia) mają dla nich mniejsze znaczenie.

Słowa kluczowe

singiel, osoby młode, zachowania konsumenckie, konsumpcja

JEL: D120, D190

Introduction

The changes taking place in the 21st century clearly indicate the permanent establishment of new forms of social life. The macro-social sphere directly affecting micro-structures provides many examples of modernist styles of family and social life. Radical changes in family life have caused — apart from positive effects — grave perturbations that were reinforced especially in the second half of the 20th century and manifest themselves with particular intensity in the 21st century.

The 21st century family is a postindustrial family that is experiencing a rapid reorganisation. In this family, the following processes and phenomena can be observed: a significant increase in women's employment not only for economic reasons, egalitarianism in marriage and family, a relatively smaller value of children in parents' perception (competitive goods), differentiation of norms and values of individual family members, modern civilisation displacing traditional values, disintegration, autonomy of family members, social and psychological aberrations of some individuals, a smaller percentage of people deciding to enter into formal marriages, an increased number of people in cohabitation relationships or singles (Tyszka, 2001, p. 198).

As rightly noted by D. Ruszkiewicz (2008, pp. 9–10), progressive singlisation (making singles) of societies is no longer surprising. Patterns that were still sharply criticised, rejected, disapproved of until recently are now an expression of positively evaluated freedom. The sense of self-efficacy, the pursuit of emancipation and individualism make it necessary to search for alternative life paths in the name of the axiological and normative order considered to be right. Singlehood is becoming increasingly common. It is a sign of independence rather than a cause for shame, it offers the opportunity to build diverse relationships and acquaintances as opposed to a sole focus on the family. There is, therefore, a chance of choice contrasting with the old, uniform pattern. Changes in mentality, distance from the institution of family, cult of independence and the building of one's own social and professional position make up the socio-cultural landscape of the 21st century. Somehow meeting social expectations, the mass media create new behavioural patterns in colourful magazines, shows or even films such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Friends* and *Ally McBeal*.

In today's society, singles are an important element of the social structure and an ever-present item in public debate. In some countries around the world, even the Singles' Day is celebrated. In the Middle Kingdom, this day is 1st November. On the Singles' Day, intense online shopping is usually done. In 2017, the sales of goods exceeded

USD 18 billion (<https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/dzien-singla-2017-rekordy-sprzedazy/b8bb0yb>, 12.06.2018). Therefore, public knowledge on this subject needs to be systematised and deepened.

This article seeks to provide some insight into consumer behaviour of young Polish singles based on the results of my research. With this in mind, four research hypotheses were formulated:

- H_1 : The level of education and wealth of young singles does not affect their shopping frequency.
- H_2 : When buying food products, young singles attach the greatest importance to their quality, freshness and origin.
- H_3 : When buying durable foods, young people living alone attach greater importance to the quality of most products than to their price.
- H_4 : Due to the shortage of free time, young singles prefer large shopping at shopping centres, visiting local bazaars and open-air markets less frequently.

The study consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical. The first one explains the notion of single, building upon a critical analysis of literature. The controversies around the scientific foundations of applying this term in social sciences stem from the heterogeneity of people living alone. For this reason, in order to fully characterise singles, the most frequently mentioned definitional criteria used in the Polish and world literature are presented. The empirical section focuses on the research conceptualisation and a description of the research sample and its characteristics. Subsequently, based on my research, an attempt is made to identify consumer behaviours of young Polish consumers living alone. Finally, major conclusions end this study.

Who are singles?

An attempt to define the notion

Contemporary expectations of the society towards young people are in contradiction with the natural model requiring marriages and procreation. In the era of rampant consumerism, career, economic stabilisation and comprehensive education that are the keys to success occupy prominent positions. Ideological and cultural changes manifesting independence require more and more commitment at the professional level. The reasons for the growing number of singles include progressive individualisation of the society and weakened social control (Ruszkiewicz, 2008, p. 134). Singlehood has undoubtedly become a guarantee of unhampered freedom of behaviour, exchange of views and pursuit of self-realisation.

The term "single" is not easy to spell out. The first attempts to define it scientifically were made in the 1930s in the American literature (Hillis, 1936). The classic American definition of "single" assumes that it is a person who is not married or in an informal heterosexual or homosexual relationship (Stein, 1981a). In English, "single" usually refers to all unmarried people, that is spinsters, bachelors, the divorced, widows and widowers (Stein, 1976). Due to an increased number of cohabitation relationships in the countries of Western culture, people in permanent informal relationships formerly treated only as preceding marriage have been recently excluded from the category of singles (Chambers-Schiller, 1999, p. 678). It is controversial to consider people living alone who have informal partners in LAT (living apart together) relationships as singles (Hertel et al., 2007). In addition, singlehood is defined as a specific lifestyle covering diet, way of spending free time and, above all, the worldview (Bauereiss & Bayer, 1995, pp. 35–60). L. Rosenmayr and F. Kolland (1997, pp. 256–287) also emphasise that the notion of single encompasses not only the physical form of living alone but also a lifestyle in which individual values and patterns of relationships materialise. It should also be noted that the term "single" is used in English in a narrower sense, referring to people following a lifestyle devoid of any family responsibilities and resulting from a conscious choice (under this approach, singles do not include old bachelors and spinsters who unsuccessfully look for life partners) (Watters, 2003). German literature most commonly defines a single as a person who lives without a lasting, deep relationship in a single-person household, regardless of the voluntary or enforced nature of such a lifestyle (Deml, 2009). In Polish, in turn, given that the word "single" has been imported, it has acquired cultural connotations and refers only to some people living alone. Living alone is not only considered as an alternative form of married and family life but as a thought-out and ultimate life project for a growing group of women and men. This subcategory is formed by inhabitants of large cities who are educated and earn wages guaranteeing economic independence and who are at an age enabling intense, both professional and social, activity and most often (however, this is not a *sine qua non* condition) live in single-person households.

The etiology of the term "single" could be explained in many ways depending on a specific context adopted by a representative of a given scientific discipline. It will be rationalised in a different manner by a sociologist, psychologist, economist or teacher. Given that literature indicates the difficulty in establishing unambiguous

criteria defining this form of marital and family life as well as permanent characteristics of the category of people living alone, the definitions of singles are nominal and functional (Paprzycka, 2008, p. 13). The group of people living alone is not homogeneous. Singles can be unmarried, widowed or divorced. These are, therefore, people whom Polish society calls unmarried or bachelors/spinsters. Already in 1970s, P. Stein (1981b) distinguished four groups of singles: voluntary temporary; voluntary permanent; involuntary temporary; and involuntary permanent. The first category includes unmarried or divorced people who are not looking for a mate, are focused on their own development, and marriage is not the ultimate goal in their lives. The second one encompasses priests, nuns and friars — their status results from religious dogma; the divorced holding the view that they cannot re-marry due to their status; and those who deny the institution of marriage in their worldview. On the other hand, "involuntary temporary singles" are those who actively seek "their other half", most often young people who have not been married yet, those over forty so far uninterested in the search of a life partner but, having attained that age, willing to live in a family, divorced or widowed people, and single parents. The last category in the above typology is "involuntary permanent singles" — generally older people who have never been married, the divorced, widowed, disabled (belittled in the "matrimonial market") who, despite active search, have failed to find the first or next mate and accept living alone for life to a greater or lesser extent.

The Polish literature contains many classifications of singles. J. Gajda distinguishes three groups (Gajda, 1987, p. 67):

- voluntary singles (old bachelors, spinsters, clerics);
- singles for reasons beyond their control (widows, widowers);
- people who live alone again (divorced, abandoned, forsaken).

According to J. Czernecka (2011, pp. 229–230), five groups of singles can be listed in the Polish society, especially in large urban agglomerations:

- uncompromising — whose life motto is: "it is better to be alone than anyhow with anyone" (people who have previously lived in failed relationships or who have seen a negative marriage model in their closest environment);
- happy — focused on a professional career and development of passions, interests, preferring freedom, accepting living alone and not needing to be in a lasting relationship, preferring short-term, temporary acquaintances;
- accustomed — people with a long record of living alone, fully accepting that state of affairs, who think that marriage is an "abnormal" state;

- romantics — people in their thirties, hitherto living alone or single at the moment, previously living in failed relationships, waiting and looking for their "other half";
- wounded — broken, living alone because they are unable to trust anyone due to trauma.

The diversity of singles makes researchers redefine them for their purposes in scientific research, referring to different variables (e.g. age, marital status, economic independence). However, social sciences lack a uniform conceptual framework for singlehood. The adoption of legal, economic and lifestyle-related criteria describing the category of singles should be considered necessary, yet, as previously demonstrated, insufficient. In this article, young singles will be understood as adults aged from 18 to 34, living alone by choice (in a single-person household or a separate flat), having no parental responsibilities, being economically independent, most often having higher or secondary education, a large group of friends and acquaintances, and strongly focused on themselves. In addition, this study assumes that singles cannot remain in informal LAT (living apart together) or distant relationships and their possible romantic relationships cannot be lasting¹. This definition thus excludes those who are in a permanent heterosexual or homosexual relationship and narrows the group of singles, allowing research uniformity.

The scale of singlehood in the world and in Poland

The group of people living alone is continuously expanding. In 1970, singles accounted for 17% of the US population; in 2010, this figure increased to 43%; in 2017, the percentage of people living alone exceeded 47%. In 2013 in New York, a 63-floor skyscraper was commissioned with 814 flats, of which 641 are studios and one-bedroom flats. Singles represent 65% of the residents of that building. In 1999 in France, 9 million people lived alone; this number increased to almost 25 million in 2003 and to 31 million in 2017. Singles now account for 17% of the French society. In Germany, 16 million and over 19 million people lived alone in 2005 and 2016 respectively (<http://www.naszswiat.net/wiadomosci/wiadomosci/polska/single-zyjacy-w-pojedynke-w-liczbach.html>, 15.03.2018).

In Poland, the largest increase in the percentage of people living alone was recorded at the turn of the 1980s, when their number rose by 20% in the 20–24 age category, by 15–18% among people aged 25–29 and by 7–11% in the 30–34 age group (Stein, 1981b). In the last thirty years, the proportion of 24-year-old women living alone has gone up from

36% to 72%, that of those aged 30–34 from 6% to 22%, and the percentage of unmarried women was 40% in the 1990s. It is estimated that an average of 160 million singles live in European countries (Ruszkiewicz, 2009). Polish data indicate that the percentage of people living alone is on the rise, primarily in the group of young adults. In 1988, there were an average of 48 spinsters per 100 women aged 20–24, with that number standing at 77 bachelors per 100 men. In 2002, there was an increase in the number of spinsters to 71 and to 78 in the case of bachelors. In turn, in the 25–29 age group, the percentage of spinsters rose from 16% to 29% and that of bachelors from 34% to 47% (Palus, 2010). The results of a survey conducted regularly by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) as part of the study "Controversies Around Various Phenomena Regarding Married and Family Life" indicate that singles constituted 25% of the total population in 2008. The research "Baby-Boom Generation" carried out by the "Metro" daily in 2008 among people aged 24–34 shows that people living alone as a result of their own subjective decisions accounted for 32% of the male population and 18% of females (Czernecka & Zalega, 2017). According to the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) data, the number of singles in Poland amounted to over 7 million in 2017, of which half a million lived in Warsaw itself. That was 26% of the entire adult population. This means that every fifth Pole now lives alone. This number is still growing, together with the awareness that singles play an increasingly important role in the Polish society. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office's forecasts, over 10 million Polish citizens will live alone in 2035 (GUS, 2018). This implies that every third adult Pole will be single.

A survey conducted by BM SMG/KRC that resulted in the *Metropolitan single* report shows that 40% of singles have a university degree (8% in the total population), 23% are directors and representatives of liberal professions, 55% like life full of challenges, novelties and changes (36% in the population), 41% work for a career and 30% of them think that money is its measure, 44% do exercise at least once a week (27% in the population), 33% are fluent in one Western language (9% in the population), 62% use the internet (every third person in the population), 51% consider themselves creative, 38% are interested in art, 35% love travelling abroad (21% in the population), 42% like to stand out from the crowd (Kobielska, 2009).

According to CBOS current research, the motives of being single include: freedom and independence (52%), deterioration of the economic situation upon starting a family (39%), inadequate housing conditions (35%), fear of a failed marriage (33%) or the slowdown of professional career (32%).

Single women indicated: firstly, "fear of a failed relationship" (62%); their life plans being thwarted and their career being slowed down (47%); followed by "unrestricted freedom" (buziak.pl/pl/singiel-w-statystykach, 15.05.2017). Research conducted in 2016 by E. Paprzycka and Z. Izdebski shows that the key reasons for singlehood are: lack of the right person (59.6%), wish to be alone (29.2%), difficulty in maintaining a relationship (11.9%), the need for freedom and independence (11.5%), negative experiences from previous relationships (11.1%), lack of time and choice of career (10.3%), reluctance resulting from the breakdown of other people's relationships (9.3%), the feeling of being unattractive (9.0%), fear of establishing a relationship and starting a family (7.7%), and a failed relationship of parents (4.4%) (Paprzycka & Izdebski, 2016).

Research conceptualisation

The tool used to conduct the research was my original questionnaire comprising 35 closed-ended questions regarding consumer behaviour of young Polish singles. The survey was carried out from 1st May to 30th July 2018. The difficulty lay in appropriate definition of the study subject because the category of "young single" is not clearly specified in the literature. Scholarly publications refer to various age ranges for the group of young people living alone, for example 25–34 years (Tymicki, 2001), 25–35 years (Żurek, 2003), 26–38 years (Tulli, 1978), 18–35 years (Shostak, 1987; Hradil, 1995; Kuklińska, 2012), 18–34 years (Rosenmayr & Kolland, 1997; Wrzesień, 2003), 25–40 years (Lubelska, 2006). In this article, those between 18 and 34 years of age are considered to be the population of young singles. The upper age limit, that is 34 years, is regarded as the end of youth in the Polish literature. The participants were recruited via the "ankietka.pl" website and social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Messenger, and e-mail. In order to partake in the survey, those interested had to visit a specific website containing the questionnaire. It was also distributed across special forums, university and private school fanpages. In accordance with the research assumptions, the sample included only persons aged 18–34, representatives of Generations Y and Z², who lived alone by choice and took independent purchase decisions in the market. In order to select the sample, the selective quota sampling procedure was used. The characteristics (quotas) covered by the research were: sex and age. During data processing, information from respondents was eliminated if the questionnaires were incomplete or incorrect

(15 instances). From among 841 initial questionnaires, 826 were considered eligible, representing 98.21% of the total sample. Further, they were coded, and the data set thus created was processed by a statistical package. For the statistical analysis of the data, the statistical package SPSS, version 23, was used.

Selection and characteristics of the research sample

Studying consumer behaviours is an extremely intricate process. This is due to the complexity of consumption and consumer purchasing behaviours in the field of consumer decision-making. Such research encompasses an important step to explain the phenomenon examined, namely adoption of specific indicators. This is essential because an indicator is used to define a certain characteristic of an object or phenomenon which is in such a relation with another characteristic that indicates the occurrence of the latter when it occurs itself. An indicator is a measurable, i.e. empirically available, variable. When consumer behaviours are investigated, indicators explaining the complexity of this phenomenon include demographic (sex, age, place of residence) and socio-economic indicators (education, disposable income).

826 people who regarded themselves as single took part in the survey, including 456 women and 370 men. All participants declared that they lived alone and were not in informal relationships such as LAT or distant relationships and all their romantic relationships were impermanent. Nearly half of respondents lived in cities of more than 500 thousand inhabitants. Every third participant had completed secondary education, more than 2/5 of respondents held a Bachelor's or engineering degree, and every third held a Master's or PhD degree. The average age of respondents was around 26 years. They were mostly students who combined studies with work. As regards monthly disposable income per capita, the largest group earned from PLN 2001.00 to PLN 3000.00. Every third respondent assessed their current financial situation as good, and every fifth as very good. It should be noted here that people born at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s are well prepared to start living independently, are focused on achieving financial success and prestige, concentrate on the development of a professional career rather than family life. It is also important that representatives of the Y and Z Generations decide to get married on average between 25 and 30 years of age. In addition, the burden of anticipated financial costs is often the reason for delaying decisions about marriage or giving up the idea whatsoever.

Table 1. The structure of respondents

Items	Number of respondents (N = 826)	Percentage share
Age:		
18–23	320	38.7
24–29	245	29.7
30–34	261	31.6
Sex:		
Female	456	55.2
Male	370	44.8
Education:		
Secondary	253	30.6
Bachelor/engineer	337	40.8
Master/PhD	236	28.6
Monthly per capita income in PLN:		
Less than 2000.00	105	12.7
2001.00–3000.00	300	36.3
3001.00–4000.00	233	28.2
More than 4000.00	188	22.8
Place of residence:		
Country	40	4.9
City of up to 20 thousand inhabitants	55	6.6
City of 20–100 thousand inhabitants	74	9.0
City of 101–200 thousand inhabitants	100	12.1
City of 201–500 thousand inhabitants	153	18.5
City of more than 500 thousand inhabitants	404	48.9

S o u r c e: the author's research.

Consumer behaviour of young singles

In order to understand shopping habits and preferences of people living alone, it is necessary to analyse: respondents' attitudes to shopping, shopping frequency, factors taken into account when shopping, and preferred shopping locations where consumer goods and services can be bought.

The research attempted to identify the attitudes of young singles towards shopping. This is an extremely important element to consider when analysing shopping habits and preferences of young consumers living alone (Table 2).

In the context of the findings, it can be concluded that over 3/4 of young singles like shopping or like it very much. Every ninth respondent claims to be reluctant to shop, and every eighth admits disliking shopping. A positive or negative attitude towards shopping is determined by the educational level and wealth of young singles. Shopping is a big or very big pleasure for people aged 24–29, mostly women with

secondary education or a Bachelor's degree, earning a monthly income of more than PLN 3000.00 per capita and most commonly living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants. The survey results reveal that young singles with secondary education more often declared that they liked shopping than the interviewed university graduates (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.317 for $p \leq 0.01$). The greatest reluctance to shop, on the other hand, was exhibited by singles aged 30–34, mainly men holding a Master's or PhD degree, earning a monthly income of above PLN 3000.00 per capita and living in large urban agglomerations.

In order to better understand the purchasing behaviour of young singles, the shopping frequency was analysed (Table 3).

The analysis makes it possible to conclude that the vast majority of respondents do shopping a few times a week. Only every twelfth woman and fewer than every tenth man do shopping once a week, and only 5% of men shop once a month. The socialisation model adopted by society, where it is women who

Table 2. Young singles' attitudes towards shopping (%)

Items	Attitude towards shopping			
	I like it very much	I like it	I do shopping because I have to	I don't like it
Total	53.8	22.5	11.2	12.5
Age:				
18–23	52.3	24.2	9.4	14.1
24–29	58.6	25.9	5.7	9.8
30–34	50.5	17.4	18.5	13.6
Sex:				
Female	58.9	21.8	7.7	11.6
Male	48.7	23.2	14.7	13.4
Education:				
Secondary	54.6	22.4	11.7	11.3
Bachelor/engineer	54.1	23.1	10.8	12.0
Master/PhD	52.7	22.0	11.1	14.2
Monthly per capita income in PLN:				
Less than 2000.00	50.3	23.2	15.2	11.3
2001.00–3000.00	54.8	22.9	10.0	12.3
3001.00–4000.00	55.0	21.6	10.0	13.4
More than 4000.00	55.1	22.3	9.6	13.0
Place of residence:				
Country	50.1	21.9	15.1	12.9
City of up to 20 thousand inhabitants	52.4	21.2	13.7	12.7
City of 20–100 thousand inhabitants	53.2	22.3	14.1	10.4
City of 101–200 thousand inhabitants	55.2	22.9	8.9	13.0
City of 201–500 thousand inhabitants	54.6	23.1	8.9	13.4
City of more than 500 thousand inhabitants	57.3	23.6	6.5	12.6

Source: the author's research.

Table 3. Frequency of shopping done by young singles (%)

Items	Sex	
	Female	Male
Less than once a month	0.0	1.6
Once a month	1.5	5.2
Once a week	8.2	9.7
A few times a week	90.3	83.5

Source: the author's research.

"should" do shopping, may to some extent explain the apparent differences in the shopping frequency between sexes. The second possibility is that women and men have different reasons to shop.

Another issue in the survey was to check how much time young people living alone spend shopping (Table 4).

Most time is spent shopping by respondents aged 30–34, chiefly women who have completed secondary education, earn a monthly per capita income not exceeding PLN 3000.00 and usually live in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants. The shortest time, on the other hand, is spent shopping by young singles aged 18–23, mainly men holding

Table 4. Time that young singles spend shopping (%)

Items	Time spent shopping		
	Up to 1 hour	Up to 3 hours	More than 3 hours
Total	52.4	27.4	20.2
Age:			
18–23	53.0	29.8	17.2
24–29	51.3	27.6	21.1
30–34	52.9	24.8	22.3
Sex:			
Female	46.2	25.4	28.4
Male	58.6	29.4	12.0
Education:			
Secondary	49.5	27.5	23.0
Bachelor/engineer	52.7	27.6	19.7
Master/PhD	55.0	27.1	17.9
Monthly per capita income in PLN:			
Less than 2000.00	54.0	24.0	22.0
2001.00–3000.00	52.1	26.5	21.4
3001.00–4000.00	52.0	29.0	19.0
More than 4000.00	51.5	29.9	18.6
Place of residence:			
Country	55.4	33.6	11.0
City of up to 20 thousand inhabitants	54.2	26.5	19.3
City of 20–100 thousand inhabitants	53.9	24.6	21.5
City of 101–200 thousand inhabitants	51.6	26.0	22.4
City of 201–500 thousand inhabitants	50.7	26.2	23.1
City of more than 500 thousand inhabitants	48.6	27.5	23.9

S o u r c e: the author's research.

a Master's or engineering degree, earning a monthly income not exceeding PLN 3000.00 per capita and living in rural areas and small cities of up to 20 thousand inhabitants.

A very good or good economic situation of the young singles surveyed did not motivate them to shop more often. It also made them more frequently say that they did not enjoy shopping and treated it as a necessity (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.174 for $p \leq 0.01$). Furthermore, some of them claimed that they usually did shopping with their friends or parents (mainly mothers).

The factors taken into account by young singles play an important role when they do shopping. The findings reveal that while shopping for food, those living alone attach considerable importance to freshness, quality, origin and promotion of products, whereas they care less about brand, advertising and complementarity of the offer (Table 5). In the light of the research, such findings are not surprising.

The survey shows that young singles are primarily driven by product quality when buying food. More than 4/5 of them indicated product

quality as a key factor when shopping for food products (especially organic food). The significance of product quality increases as income rises. Wealthier young consumers, who are inherently more demanding, aspiring and curious, are interested in buying better product substitutes or more luxurious products. Indeed, this is confirmed by the direct research. The greatest interest in better quality goods was demonstrated by the wealthiest households with monthly disposable incomes of more than PLN 4000.00 per capita, and vice versa: the lower the income, the less important the product quality (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.221 for $p \leq 0.01$). It should be pointed out here that quality is a set of advantages and disadvantages of a particular food product as viewed by consumers themselves. Hence, as a typical immeasurable feature, it is purely subjective and is assessed by a specific person. Age proved to be a variable differentiating respondents' opinions in this regard. Quality as the fundamental factor when buying food products was most commonly mentioned by those in the 30–34 age group (90.3%), and least frequently by respondents aged 18–23

Table 5. Determinants of food purchases made by young singles (%)

Items	Very important	Important	Not important
Price	62.3	30.9	6.8
Quality	80.4	15.4	4.2
Utility	49.3	54.7	–
Brand	30.2	60.1	9.7
Fashion	15.8	42.2	42.0
Promotions	30.7	49.0	20.3
Shopping location	40.3	39.1	20.6
Product packaging	25.6	61.6	12.8
Habit	16.0	49.4	34.6
Wish to stand out	3.7	11.2	85.1
Advertising	38.8	47.5	13.7

S o u r c e: the author's research.

(64.7%). The level of education also varies singles' opinions on the quality of purchased food products (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.311 for $p \leq 0.01$). This opinion was voiced most often by respondents with a Master's degree (91.6%), and least frequently by young singles with secondary education (67.3%).

More than 3/5 of them indicated product price as a key factor when shopping for food products. Based on the empirical material collected, it was observed that women mentioned price as the fundamental factor in purchasing food products slightly more frequently than men (77.6% and 68.4% respectively). It was also noted that singles' opinions were influenced by their age (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.216 for $p \leq 0.01$). Respondents aged 30–34 (64.7%) agreed with this statement least frequently whereas those aged 18–23 (90.3%) did so most often. The level of education also varies opinions about the impact of price on decisions to buy food products (Kendall's tau-b coefficient was 0.311 for $p \leq 0.01$). Young singles with secondary education (91.6%) most commonly declared that price was the most important aspect when they purchased food.

For nearly half of young singles, utility matters when buying food products, and 2/5 of those surveyed care about advertising and shopping location. These factors were most often indicated as key determinants of purchasing food products by those aged 30–34 who held a Bachelor's or Master's degree and earned a monthly per capita income of more than PLN 3000.00.

Every third respondent indicated promotions and brands as factors that played a vital role when shopping for food. The distribution of answers varied depending largely on singles' wealth (34.2% in the wealthiest households to 19.7% in the poorest households with up to PLN 2000.00 per

capita), educational level (35.2% of responses among singles with a Master's degree, and the smallest proportion of respondents with secondary education — 21.6%), age (brand was most frequently mentioned as the fundamental factor when shopping for food by respondents aged 30–34, and least often by those aged 18–23). Significantly fewer young singles pointed to: product packaging (25.6%), habit (16.0%), fashion (15.8%) and the wish to stand out (3.7%).

The factors driving their purchase decisions regarding possessions are presented in Table 6.

Interesting insights were provided by the analysis of data on the criteria for selecting market products. Respondents' choices of clothing and footwear are determined by four factors: price, quality, brand and fashion, whereas product utility is less significant. In the case of furniture, the decisive role is played mainly by price and utility. Quality is slightly less important, although not meaningless. When buying household appliances and electronics, young singles primarily take quality and brand into account, with slightly smaller focus on determinants such as price and utility. When purchasing cleaning products, they are motivated by: quality, price, brand and habits. In turn, decisions to buy cosmetics for everyday personal care are affected by price, quality and some habits of the singles surveyed. Also brand plays a role here, albeit somewhat smaller. A significant group of market products is also broadly understood services, e.g. medical, cultural and leisure services. The purchase of medical services is determined by quality and price. Brand and shopping location also play their part, though to a lesser extent. Similar drivers come to the fore in the case of cultural and leisure services.

Table 6. Factors taken into consideration by young singles when purchasing selected market goods (%)

Category	Clothing and footwear	Furniture	Household appliances	Household electronics	Cleaning products	Personal care	Medical services	Cultural and leisure services
Price	67.8	64.7	48.6	49.8	52.4	25.6	71.6	63.8
Quality	66.3	62.3	89.5	88.4	34.3	21.2	96.8	61.2
Utility	46.5	67.5	39.6	56.7	3.8	3.9	–	13.4
Brand	68.5	30.9	83.7	85.9	17.9	11.6	–	51.2
Fashion	61.2	8.7	2.1	5.3	1.0	1.0	–	12.6
Promotions	31.3	5.4	15.2	9.2	7.9	8.6	3.5	4.1
Shopping location	9.2	14.8	7.7	7.9	4.7	3.9	54.2	24.6
Product packaging	1.8	1.0	1.0	1.2	9.3	3.4	–	–
Habit	5.9	2.1	1.0	3.7	30.2	23.8	43.9	7.9
Possibility of standing out	36.8	1.0	5.6	5.8	–	–	–	3.1
Advertising	20.7	1.7	3.2	4.1	6.1	2.4	1.5	5.8

Source: the author's research.

In the context of the study, it can be concluded that young people living alone, when buying durable goods, attach greater weight to the quality of most products rather than their price. Such a preference as to determinants becomes specifically vital in the case of household appliances, electronics and medical services. On the other hand, when buying clothing and footwear, furniture, cleaning products, cosmetics for personal care and cultural and art services, young singles consider price as the fundamental factor.

When analysing consumer behaviour, the types of products most often purchased by young singles are also significant (Table 7).

most money on food. When analysing the types of products that are particularly popular among the surveyed young singles, it can be stated that women prefer buying products that improve their appearance and attractiveness such as cosmetics and jewellery. The interest in this product category derives from the desire to increase self-esteem by improving one's image. Men, on the other hand, prefer electronic gadgets and sports equipment. These products are somehow related with prestige and power. According to Guerreschi (2005), young men concentrate on things associated with power and progress, striving to appear as better than viewed by themselves or other people.

Table 7. Products most often purchased by young singles (%)

Product group	Sex	
	Female	Male
Food	30.2	38.3
Clothing and footwear	41.4	26.2
Cosmetics	16.1	6.7
Jewellery and accessories	3.5	0.5
Sports equipment	2.4	11.2
Household electronics (TV sets, smartphones, laptops, etc.)	1.8	10.3
Household appliances	1.0	1.6
Books	1.3	1.4
CDs (music)	2.3	3.8

Source: the author's research.

More than 2/5 of women say that they most frequently spend money on clothing and footwear. In turn, over 38% of men admit that they spend

In order to learn about shopping habits and preferences of young singles, their preferred locations for buying consumer goods and services

should also be analysed. Many young singles want to find everything they need easily and relatively quickly, hence not only shop arrangement and appropriate product display are vital but it is also the relative proximity of shops that matters. Due to less free time on weekdays, young singles usually do smaller shopping in corner shops and mini-markets in the neighbourhood then. At weekends, they make larger purchases at super- and hypermarkets. Over 4/5 of them buy clothing and footwear, exclusive cosmetics, interior design elements and hobby-related items in shopping centres. The advantages of such locations include: a large number of shops, long opening hours, possibility to move freely from one shop to another at one place, and free parking space. Therefore, large shopping centres are treated by most respondents as the most convenient form of bigger shopping. Shopping centres are visited by singles aged 24–29 (84.3%), mostly women (83.7%) who hold a Bachelor's or engineering degree (82.7%), earn a monthly disposable income of above PLN 3000.00 per capita and live in cities of over 100 thousand inhabitants.

Almost 2/5 of young singles shop at open-air markets and small corner shops. Nearby open-air markets, bazaars and corner shops are visited by respondents primarily on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. People living alone who shop there most commonly buy food, notably fruit and vegetables, bread, poultry, meat, cold cuts and chicken eggs. According to the young singles surveyed, shopping at small corner shops and open-air markets has many advantages. These include: freshness of food, proximity to the place of living, possibility of ordering a specific product that is not generally in stock, friendly service, and trustworthiness of shop assistants. Shopping at small corner shops and bazaars is done chiefly by singles in the 30–34 age group (42.3%), predominantly women (45.2%), those holding a Master's degree (44.6%), earning a monthly income of over PLN 4000.00 per capita and living in cities of more than 100 thousand inhabitants (42.7%).

Conclusion

Nowadays, singlehood is becoming a major concept of life and constitutes a new cultural quality. The view of single men at the cinema no longer surprises anyone and the view of independent women sitting at cafés for hours has established its permanent presence within the customs and rhythm of metropolitan life (Felcman & Koperski, 2010, p. 90). It can be presumed that the following years will see even more profound changes in this respect, and singlehood will be visible not only in large urban agglomerations and

smaller cities but also in rural areas. Political changes that have taken place in Poland, globalisation and the dynamic development of new media are continuously altering traditional views on the family and the functioning of individuals in society. Young people today are under pressure to achieve professional success, to ensure their financial and economic autonomy, making them postpone the decision to start a family. These transformations result in marriages being entered into at an older age and an increased percentage of young people living in single-person households. Generally, this category includes well-educated people with high professional aspirations who give up starting a family because they prefer to devote their time to developing their own careers. Looking ahead, the forecasts point out that the tendency to consciously choose singlehood is being strengthened. The increase in the number of single people, the focus on building social relationships and the devotion to career are symptoms of a change in social mentality and a reformulation of values. This certainly does not mean devaluation of the family as the basic social unit, an intergenerational link and an institution of cultural transmission.

In the context of the findings, young singles can be considered very active consumers. Over 3/4 of them like shopping or like it very much. Most people living alone do shopping a few times a week. The shopping frequency and time are determined by their demographic and social characteristics such as sex, educational level and place of residence. The greatest pleasure is derived from shopping by singles in the 24–29 age group, mostly women holding a Bachelor's or Master's degree, earning a monthly income of more than PLN 3000.00 per capita and most commonly living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants. While shopping for food, young singles attach considerable importance to freshness, quality, origin and promotion of food products, whereas they care less about brand, advertising and complementarity of the offer. In the case of durable goods, they attach the greatest importance to quality, price and brand of products, with other determinants (fashion, promotions, shopping location, product packaging, advertising, the possibility of standing out) being less significant. Young singles enjoy visiting shopping centres. Large shopping centres are preferred when they buy more valuable products such as clothes, exclusive cosmetics, interior design elements or hobby-related items. They much less frequently buy products at local bazaars, open-air markets or small corner shops, where they usually buy food. To conclude, it can be unequivocally stated that all the research hypotheses adopted in the article have been positively verified.

Taking into account the presented survey results, some limitations ensuing from a relatively small research sample should be borne in mind. Following

the conclusions made, they should not be treated as representative of the population of young Polish singles. They only provide some insight into actual consumer behaviours of young people living alone. This publication should contribute to a broader

discussion and exchange of views on consumer behaviour of Polish singles, thereby encouraging other Polish scholars and researchers from various scientific and research centres to carry out extensive research in this area.

Endnotes

¹ This definition of a "young single" was presented to people participating in the survey before filling in the questionnaire.

² Consumers representing Generation Y (people born between 1978 and 1994) and Generation Z (those born after 1994) primarily communicate through social media such as Facebook or Twitter, and their purchase decisions are determined by their peers' opinions posted on online forums. What is characteristic of this group is impulse buying and a large share of online transactions. Generation Y consumers excel at modern technologies and feel good in virtual communities. They expect diverse products, competitive prices, new experiences and pleasure, and products and services tailored to their individual needs and preferences. Generation Z, on the other hand, is the youngest group of consumers in the market, with such characteristics as: connected, computerised, always clicking, community-oriented, and content-centric. Compared to Generation Y, they use new technologies even more. More in: Cohen (2009, pp. 57–59) and Williams and Page (2011, pp. 1–17).

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