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**Millennial consumers  
in the convenience food  
market****1. Introduction**

Consumer behavior researchers have observed a growing trend in the consumption of convenience food products of high quality, which is currently one of the biggest trends in the food industry. Convenience food products allow the consumer to save time and effort associated with shopping, meal preparation and cooking, consumption and post-meal activities. The sources of development of this segment of food are said to include a number of social changes, most notably the increasing number of smaller households and women who are economically active, social tendency for more active leisure and the growing importance of free time, and the disappearing tradition of eating meals together. At the same time, various appliances, such as microwave ovens, have improved household equipment, while people themselves have shown to become less and less skilled at preparing meals (Berry et al. 2002, pp. 1-17; Olsen et al. 2009, pp. 762-783). The demand for food products is gradually increasing, which is why understanding consumer behavior in the convenience food market is an important issue (Brunner, Van der Horst, Siegrist 2010, pp. 498-506). Knowledge in this field may be useful in the process of developing

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marketing strategies. The purpose of the article is to present the attitude towards convenience food of the representatives of Generation Y (also known as millennials). Literature analysis and results of the author's own surveys were used in the research proceedings. The research was conducted on a group of 364 millennial (Y Generation) consumers, living in the following Polish provinces: Lubuskie, Zachodnio-Pomorskie, Dolnośląskie and Opolskie.

## 2. Convenience food in the Polish market

Convenience food – along with genetically modified food, organic food, ethnic food and functional food – belongs to the category denominated as novel food (Dąbrowska, Babicz-Zielińska 2011, pp. 39-46). This type of food is becoming increasingly competitive in relation to traditional products, especially among the younger generation characterized by significant economic (professional) activity, irregular lifestyle and overall lack of time. Martine de Boer et al. (2004, pp. 155-165) argue that convenience food encompasses all products subject to secondary processing, including ready-made meals, processed meat, pizzas and pates, appetizers, soups, etc. These are food products obtained as a result of processing raw materials as recommended by good technological practice, thanks to which the products obtain the desired durability and can be quickly prepared alone or in combination with other processed components of safe meals (Babicz-Zielińska et al. 2010, pp. 141-153). It is processed food whose high level of culinary preparation allows it to be used as an effort-saving alternative to less processed products. The literature tends to divide processed food into three groups (Makała 2013, pp. 105-118):

- traditional food – meals prepared from fresh products that are already pre-prepared (e.g. pre-packed salad ingredients),
- semi-convenience food – meals prepared from pre-processed products (e.g. breaded pork chops),
- convenience food – ready-made meals, as well as soups, sauces, desserts, including meals consumed outside (in bars, restaurants) or in convenient packaging.

The demand for convenience food depends on economic, social and cultural elements, including the change in the current eating habits, which consists in departing from traditionalism. The growing popularity convenience food is also determined by the change in the lifestyle led by the Polish people, especially younger generations, the way of spending free time, or the increased value of time devoted to the preparation of meals. Equally important are: increased economic

activity among women, increased social mobility, different organization of life and family nutrition, increasing share in the elderly population, growing number of one-person and two-person households, improved social wealth in industrialized countries that enables the acquisition of more expensive food products, increasing share of food consumed outside home, and finally growing popularity of so-called snacks and increased interest in products coming from other cultures (Krełowska-Kułas 2005, pp.141-148; Alexy et al. 2008, pp. 345-351; Babicz-Zielińska et al. 2010, pp. 141-153; Adamczyk 2010, pp. 5-13; Szwacka-Mokrzycka 2013). The development of this sector is further fostered by a positive economic climate, the development of a market economy, a wide and diversified market offer, as well as technological factors - technological innovation, various food preservation alternatives, development of new packaging, increased processing degrees, new quality systems (Adamczyk 2010, pp. 5-13). As indicated by M. Krełowska-Kułas (2005, pp.141-148), the market success of convenience food relies both on consumer evaluation of sensory values and product usability, as well as on relevant product information that builds consumer confidence in it. Consumers should also participate in the discussion about the benefits and risks associated with its consumption (table 1).

**Table 1. Benefits and risks associated with the consumption of convenience food**

Benefits	Risks
<p><b>Related to functional benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• convenience in trade and use outside home (e.g. in tourism, at work),</li> <li>• facilitating the preparation of meals in collective and small catering establishments (time, staff qualifications, equipment).</li> </ul> <p><b>Related to economic benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• saving time in preparation for consumption and reduced food waste.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Related to food intake:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lower content vitamins and their biological activity,</li> <li>• reduced digestibility of highly processed meals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Related to hygiene and health:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased risk of NO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>3</sub> poisoning and poisoning with pesticides,</li> <li>• overdose of food additives,</li> <li>• hazards associated with new packaging technologies (gases, anaerobic bacteria, packaging substances penetrating products from within),</li> <li>• contamination of the environment with packaging waste and their utilization products,</li> <li>• lower product supervision (longer route from raw materials to the consumer).</li> </ul>

Source: Krełowska-Kułas 2005, pp. 141-148

The changes taking place in the pattern of consumption in Poland to a certain degree reflect general global trends observed in the food market. According to J. Szwacka (2007, pp. 81-95), they mainly concern the increase in demand for convenience food, which is the leading trend on a global scale. The “convenience” trend is marked by a high demand for convenience food products, an increased significance of product origin, and a growing demand for food delivery services. This is indicated by H. Henze and B. Schulte (2005, pp. 32-34). Food processing companies can build their offer around this trend. Other food consumption trends in the Polish market include a growing interest of consumers in fresh food and an increased demand for food delivery services. In addition, there is a relatively weak interest in genetically modified food and food products that contain various additives, with a simultaneous increase in trust in organic food (Szwacka 2007, pp. 81-95).

Modern “convenience food” is designed in a comprehensive way that includes not only the recipe, processing and preservation of food ingredients, but also the type of packaging material, packaging system, type of packaging, recommended storage and preparation for consumption (Adamczyk 2010, pp. 5-13; Dąbrowska and Babicz-Zielińska 2011, pp. 39-46).

### **3. Generation Y as a research subject**

The problem of researching the attitudes and behaviors of shoppers regarding new foods that appear in the market is particularly important from the standpoint of business practice - it helps understand and forecast the demand for these products, which in turn facilitates developing effective marketing strategies (Barska and Wojciech 2017, pp. 497-505). This article presents selected results of research studies on purchasing behaviors of Generation Y in the convenience market. Generation Y, also known as millennials, is a relatively new concept, derived from the United States where researchers were described this social group as a separate phenomenon for the first time (Twenge 2014). The research assumes that the Millennials are people born after 1984, who grew up in times of rapid economic and technological development (Barska and Wojciech 2017, pp. 497-505). Literature analysis shows that the behavior of a given generation is shaped by specific socio-economic conditions in which its members grow up, which in turn shape their worldviews and approach to life. Specific characteristics can be found in many areas of interest, such as lifestyle, choice of education or work, as well as shopping behavior. According to C. Bakewell & V.W. Mitchell,

(2003, pp. 95-106) the factors determining the buying behavior of Generation Y consumers are:

- a significant number of shopping channels and unlimited shopping hours,
- an unlimited credit and loan environment, e.g. interest-free periods, deferred payments, cashback, multiple credit and store credit cards, short-term loans,
- post-modern culture, in which goods and services, rather than profession, tend to define a social position,
- advertising and marketing information from an increasing number of sources, e.g. television, mobile phones, e-commerce,
- smaller gender gap,
- more instances of growing up in non-traditional family units.

The key event in the European dimension for this generation were political changes, mainly the overthrow of the communist system in Eastern Europe which is considered as the time Generation Y was born in Eastern Europe. Generation Y representatives are friendly towards innovation (Barska 2014, pp. 419-431). The characteristics of Generation Y consumers demonstrate that the Internet and social media have played a major role in shaping their behaviors and shopping attitudes. These consumers live in the online network, where they make purchases, obtain information, or contact others. These distinctive features may prompt the need to collect information about generations in general. Generation Y has a high purchasing power and therefore becomes the crucial segment for marketers.

#### **4. Research methodology**

Consumer behavior was analyzed in the research proceedings using a number of methodological perspectives, in accordance with the concept of triangulation (Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska 2014, pp. 189-201). The conducted study involved the analysis of the literature and selected results of the author's own empirical research carried out using the survey method in a group of 364 consumers. The total surveyed area had 6,55,4669 inhabitants, with millennials making up 20.2% of the general population, which provided the basis for determining the sample. The scheme of determining the sample size was accounted for the assumption that a confidence rate of 0.95 and a 3% order of approximation were adopted in the statistical conclusion regarding the fraction coefficient. The author's original questionnaire was prepared on the basis of a focus interview and it was structured during pilot studies. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ -test was used for the evaluation, with its values contained within the range

(0.70 - 0.90), which allowed to positively evaluate the measurement scales in terms of internal consistency and reliability (Hinton, Brownlow, McMurvay and Cozens 2004). Statistical analysis of interdependencies between pairs of variables was performed using the chi-square of association. If the assumptions of the test were not met, its p-value value was determined simulationally using the Monte Carlo method. The significance level of 0.05 was adopted. The strength of the relationship between the pairs of variables was determined by means of the corrected contingency coefficient ( $C_{cor}$ ). In order to examine the coexistence of the category of three variables, correspondence analysis was carried out. Total inertia, i.e. indicators describing the association between specific features, was also interpreted in the process (Stanimir, 2005, p. 28). Statistical analyses were performed in the R software program (R Core Team 2014). The limited framework of this paper forced the author to present only some of the study results. The presented research results can be applied only to the surveyed population due to the non-probabilistic nature of sampling. The territorial scope of the research also does not apply to the whole of Poland.

## 5. Discussion and research results

In the surveyed group, the majority were women, who constituted nearly 56% of the respondents. One in four respondents was a resident of rural areas, while the rest were urban dwellers. Surveyed Generation Y consumers express a positive attitude towards convenience food, with 66% of the respondents admitting to using it.. Among the analyzed factors influencing the choice of convenience food, the respondents mentioned mainly ease of preparation for consumption (75%), followed by convenience (72%) and time savings (61%). As pointed out by Verlegh et al. (1999, pp. 457-467), M. de Boer et. al. (2004, pp. 155-165) and E. Babicz-Zielińska (2010, pp. 141-153), the interest in convenience food is due to consumers' interest in reducing the preparation time for ready meals, the desire to devote free time to work or leisure, spending less time on cleaning and economical product management. Factors such as advertising played a much smaller role in the context discussed. The conducted research shows that the respondents significantly differed in terms of time orientation, including the perceived shortage of time, the extent to which they value time and express their sensitivity to time-related problems, which translates into their particular attitude towards convenience food.

In the course of the research, it was verified whether the declarations of the respondents depend on metric variables, assumed to be: gender, place of

residence, family situation and situation in terms of own income. Due to the fact that these questions had different categories of answers, the corrected contingency coefficient  $C_{\text{Pearsona}}$  ( $C_{\text{cor}}$ ) was applied for corrective purposes. The strongest correlation was established between the attitude towards convenience food and economic activity ( $\chi^2=18.872$ ,  $p=0.0004$ ,  $C_{\text{cor}}=0,358$ ). Professionally active people tend to appreciate this type of food significantly more, as do those with higher incomes ( $\chi^2=24.65622$ ,  $p=0.0023$ ,  $C_{\text{cor}}=0.280$ ), residents of larger agglomerations ( $\chi^2=12.642$ ,  $p=0.0018$ ,  $C_{\text{cor}}=0,236$ ) and people representing smaller households ( $\chi^2=6.937$ ,  $p=0.0312$ ,  $C_{\text{cor}}=0,247$ ) (Table 1). Similar conclusions were drawn by E. Babicz-Zielińska et al. (2010, pp. 141-153), while slightly results in relation to the place of residence and income situation were presented by M. Krełowska-Kułas (2005, pp. 141-148). The obtained research results indicate that gender was not a statistically differentiating variable. This may be due to gender blending - a social phenomenon consisting in blurring the boundaries between roles and behaviors traditionally attributed to women and men, and overtaking behavioral patterns of the opposite sex.

**Table 2. Corrected contingency coefficient for respondents' opinions on the attitude towards convenience food and analyzed metric variables**

Variable	Statistical dependence between the rank of the criterion of food product purchase and metric variables expressed in the corrected contingency coefficient $C_{\text{Pearsona}}$				
	Gender	Economic activity	Place of residence	Family situation	Own income situation
Attitude towards convenience food	NS	0.358	0.236	0.247	0.280

P-value below 0.05, NS - statistically independent features

Source: own study based on surveys

The interest and purchase of new-generation food are determined by the consumer's valuation of the various options of choosing the most preferred options in a given situation. It is the selection of the most favorable product alternative, or taking into account its organoleptic characteristics, supplied nutrients and other benefits that extend beyond nutrition (Górska-Warsewicz, Świątkowska, Krajewski, 2013, p. 119). Correspondence analysis for concurrent occurrences

of the variable categories describing the consumer evaluation criteria for an innovative food product shows that surveyed consumers mainly seek products with high taste values at an affordable price, although these are not the only evaluation criteria. The analysis helps observe that three segments of consumers are distinguished: 1) seeking innovative products that, mostly, have high health values, enhance beauty, and are not excessively processed; 2) expecting products containing social attributes<sup>1</sup> - originating from manufacturers and producers respecting the principles of environmental protection and fair trade, implementing good practices towards animals, in ecological packaging; for these consumers it is important to be able to express their views even at the expense of a higher price, and 3) interested in food products that are easy to prepare and use - single-dose products in special packaging, either processed or semi-processed, ready for consumption without special treatment, ready to be served directly after opening the package. These are categories referred to as hedonic attributes, health and ethics, and purchase and convenience. The first are hedonic attributes resulting from remembered past experiences (taste, appearance, consistency quality, consistency of quality). Attributes named "health and ethics" are based on faith (nutritional value, safety, health) and ethics (environment-friendly, supports the local economy). The third category are attributes related to purchase and convenience that derived from commercial aspects (availability, range, price) and convenience (ease of preparation, preparation time). The separate evaluation criteria for innovative food products coincide with three groups of attributes of food products proposed by the research team led by M. Grzybowska-Brzezińska and J. Klepacka (2015, pp. 80-89).

It should be noted that packaging plays an important role in the convenience food segment as it determines the possibilities of innovation, convenience of use and safety for the consumer. According to consumers, packaging is an important factor in the selection of food products, and they attention to the benefits it comes with, such as convenience of use (weight 3.51 at the maximum rating of 4), durability (3.40) and unit price (3.31) (Wyrwa and Barska 2017, pp. 770-779).

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▼  
1 The response to these expectations is the increased number of "ethical and environmental" statements, e.g. about the use of environment-friendly packaging or caring for the welfare of people and animals: there was as much as 22% such products among the new products introduced for sale in the period from September 2016 to August 2017. Report "Globalne trendy na rynku żywności i napojów w 2018r." [„Global trends in the food and beverage market in 2018”] by Mintel.

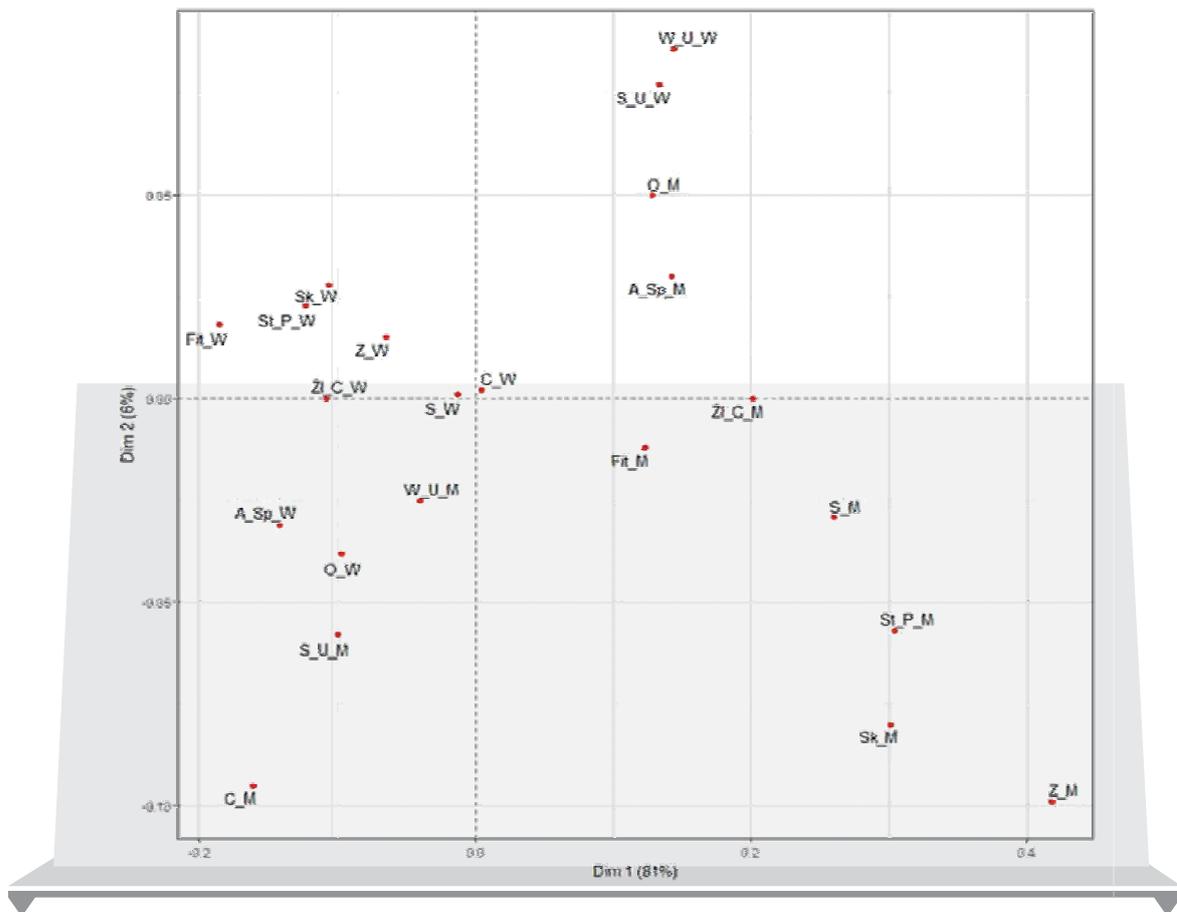
Analysis of the obtained empirical data indicates that the value of the convenience of use and consumption provided by convenience food products plays an important role for a significant part of Generation Y representatives. The results show that convenience food consumption and orientation towards convenience in the food industry are mainly related with values that prompt people to seek new experiences, act independently and reinforce their own personal interests, while they are in conflict with the values of environmental protection and self-transcendence. Strong predictors were concern for naturalness, nutritional knowledge and cooking skills (cf. Botonaki & Mattas 2010, pp. 629-638).

The factor limiting the development of this category of food products - especially hamburgers, pizza and other fast foods - is the fact they are perceived as unhealthy food choices.

It is worth noting that relations between the categories of indicated variables were mapped in a two-dimensional space, ultimately reproducing a very high 87% of the original interdependencies (figure 1).

#### Designations:

- A\_Sp – refers to the social attributes of the product – coming from manufacturers/ producers who comply with the principles of environmental protection and fair trade, and implement good practices towards animals
- C – product price
- Fit – identifies such aspects of food as the content of ingredients that positively affect the body, including delaying aging processes and enhancing physical appearance
- O – environmental aspects of the packaging
- S – taste values of a food product
- Sk – product content/ingredients
- St. P – degree of processing of the food product
- S\_U – products already processed or semi-processed, ready for consumption without special treatment, ready to be served
- Z – refers to such aspects of food as the content of ingredients beneficial to health, reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases, preventing risks and hazards
- ZI\_C – food certificates and markings
- W\_U – disposable, single-use products in special packaging (convenience food), food products that can be easily used
- \_W – important and very important criterion in the process of evaluating an innovative food product
- \_M – insignificant and little important criterion in the process of evaluating an innovative food product



**Figure 1. Graphical presentation of the results of the correspondence analysis for simultaneous occurrences of the variable categories describing the evaluation criteria of an innovative food product**

Dimension 1 explains 81% of total inertia, Dimension 2 - 6% of this inertia

Source: own study and own calculations (R 3.1.0 software)

## 6. Conclusions

The consciousness of society has changed, with people starting to be driven not only by possession and access to food, but also its quality, functionality, diversity and appeal. This research out indicates that the aspects of convenience and speed of use, preparation and consumption constitute an important criterion in choosing food products among some representatives of Generation Y. Convenience food allows the consumer to save time and effort, which is

particularly important for those people who are economically active. As indicated by experts, the Polish market for convenience products is still underdeveloped and includes mainly dishes with traditional recipes and with a fairly large share of frozen, canned or jarred products. The increase in purchasing power and the importance of pro-health trends make Polish consumers seek high-quality, fresh and healthy products that are at the same time convenient to use (*Convenience ...*, [www.portalspozywczy.pl](http://www.portalspozywczy.pl)). the where of growing, breeding, harvesting and processing of raw materials, as well as the sale of finished products. Manufacturers should focus their marketing strategies on the development of products aimed at satisfying the needs of consumers, both in terms of taste, health benefits and the convenience of use.

When designing new convenient food products, account should be taken of the social changes. In reference to the social changes taking place in Poland, M. Kociszewski (2007, pp. 24-29) indicates the following trends of the Polish market of convenience food:

- traditional Polish food products sold as ready-made meals in jars and cans,
- an extended range of traditional Polish soups sold in *Doypacks* (soft plastic packaging in the form of sachets),
- an enriched range of vegetable, typically vegetarian dishes,
- an increased offer of ready-made dinner plates that combine vegetables with meat, mushrooms and complementary ingredients (pasta, potatoes, noodles) in modern packaging,
- an increased supply of cold meals in packaging that allows their direct heating,
- ready-made meals with an extended shelf life of up to 12 months and sold in innovative packaging,
- an increased popularity of ready-made ethnic dishes: Greek, French, Mexican, Asian.

Building trust requires the use of integrated communication systems, and the Internet proves a particularly useful channel to communicate with millennials.

## Summary

### **Millennial consumers in the convenience food market**

The demand for food products is gradually increasing, which is why understanding consumer behavior in the convenience food market is an important issue. Knowledge in this field may be useful in the process of developing marketing strategies. The purpose of the article is to present the attitude towards convenience food of the representatives of Generation Y (also known as millennials).

Literature analysis and results of the author's own surveys were used in the research proceedings. The research was conducted on a group of 364 millennial consumers living in the border area of Southwestern.

**Keywords:** *convenience food, generation Y, Millennial, consumer behavior, correspondence analysis, survey.*

### Streszczenie

#### **Konsumenci generacji Y na rynku żywności wygodnej**

Zapotrzebowanie na żywność wygodną zwiększa się stopniowo, dlatego zrozumienie zachowań konsumentów na rynku żywności wygodnej jest ważnym zagadnieniem. Wiedza z tego zakresu może być przydatna w procesie formułowania strategii marketingowych. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie stosunku do żywności wygodnej przedstawicieli pokolenia Y. W postępowaniu badawczym wykorzystano analizę literatury oraz wyniki własnych badań ankietowych. Badania przeprowadzono w grupie 364 konsumentów reprezentujących generację Y, zamieszkujących tereny przygraniczne południowo - zachodniej Polski.

### Słowa

**kluczowe:** *żywność wygodna, generacja Y, milenialsi, zachowania konsumenta, analiza korespondencji, badania ankietowe.*

### JEL

**Classification:** D 12, Q 13, E 21.

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