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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS IN HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT: Questionnaires were done for research of the local consumer evaluation aiming the topic of traditional horticultural products in the sphere of products in horticulture and food industry. We have three hypotheses: 1. The consumers are able to associate with messages bound up with characteristic, regional products. 2. In the decision-making process, in connection with the purchase and consumption of the consumer, the knowledge of the source of supply is an influential factor. 3. The product character of traditional horticultural products gives the chance to the consumer to acknowledge the excellent and individual feature of the product in a higher price, consequently, the higher price will be less influential factor in their decision-making process of the purchase. In the years 2010-2011 primary research has been conducted on agricultural and food manufacturers of traditional horticultural products. To analyse the survey data, we have used SPSS 14.0 for Windows and LISREL 8.30. **Methods:** Confidence-interval calculation, a variable structure test with factor analysis, a variable structure test with cluster analysis, multi dimensional scaling and correspondence analysis. It can easily be brought to light that the consumers select product not even on the basis of its price, appearance but rather on the basis of its particular taste and the excellent quality. The consumers regard - beside the perceptible attributes - the Hungarian provenance, place of origin and the traditional feature as an important aspect. In the analysis of traditional horticultural products we can divide two independent factors can be distinguished: quality and economic factors. **KEYWORDS:** Hungarian agriculture, production, price, quality, country image

INTRODUCTION

A new tendency of consumer attitude has been emerging with a shift from the simplistic perception of foodstuff as mere agricultural products towards a more complex perception where foodstuff also has a cultural dimension. According to Sini (2000), the associability of a product with a special purpose, tradition or place of origin gives rise to the adoption of this attitude. Products that can be easily associated with a particular culture or place of origin have the potential to create market gaps, thus a reverse tendency to consumer standardization emerges (Szakály et al, 2008, 2010).

In the case of foodstuff, the country image is of utmost importance due to the fact that consumers, besides building a specific mental image of a particular product, also tend to assign products positive or negative images of the country of origin.

The favorable geographical location of Hungary allows the production of foodstuff of high added-value and outstanding quality.

Hungarian agricultural production areas generally enjoy wide international recognition; however, building a strong international image of Hungarian agricultural production areas needs product restructuring and technological innovation as well as a variety of other factors, such as the atmosphere of a particular agricultural production area, production related know-how or the history and traditions of the

given region, can benevolently contribute to this image building.

MATERIAL AND METHOD - Market research

The opinion survey refers to information collection, whereby a small section of a group of numerous individuals or institutions is selected via professional sampling and this selected section is then interviewed (Baglyas et al, 2013).

The primary market research consists of the gathering of original, previously uncollected information and data, whereby the collection is undertaken with a specific purpose. I sought the answer to various questions during recording; therefore each answer can be registered as a variable as they can take varying values within a certain number interval. These are the dependent variables because, depending on the respondents, the result will be different, too. The questions (variables) remain the same throughout the questionnaire and the interviewees (respondents) are referred to as cases (Kőszegi et al, 2013).

Paired t-test analysis

For paired t-tests, the same respondents are tested repeatedly, thus test series are conducted on the same respondents and the paired t-test is used to examine the differences.

A variable for the differences observable in the pair is created (marked as D) and then the average and variance of this variable is calculated.

Subsequently, the *t*-statistics is established. The degree of freedom is “*n*-1”, where “*n*” stands for the even number of the examinations (Pallóné, 2007).

Pearson’s Chi-squared test

The exact significance test is based on two hypotheses; one is referred to as null hypothesis and the other is as alternative hypothesis, respectively (Deák et al, 2010, 2011). The Chi-squared test uses the following formula:

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^2 \sum_{j=1}^2 \frac{(f_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

Confidence interval calculation

During the evaluation of questionnaires, representing the results simply in percentages is often insufficient or even misleading, given that the resulting differences do not reflect reliably whether the variation is significant or not.

The answers to the particular questions in the examined population helped me identify both the percentage of the positive answers and their confidence-intervals, the latter values revealing the real differences. The calculation of the confidence-intervals is inevitable for the establishment of a reliable conclusion on our hypotheses, especially in cases where the number of sample elements significantly differs.

RESULTS - Assessment of the importance of taste

Quality has various components which can be communicated in a variety of messages. Taste, ingredients, high quality and traditional production methods are all related to the attitudes associated with Hungarian foodstuff. Our research examines the importance of taste for making decisions on the purchase of traditional products.

The respondents have been segmented on the basis of their sex, age and educational attainment in order to examine whether these factors influence the outcome of the purchase decision making process. No significant difference can be identified; the respondents obviously find taste either important or very important.

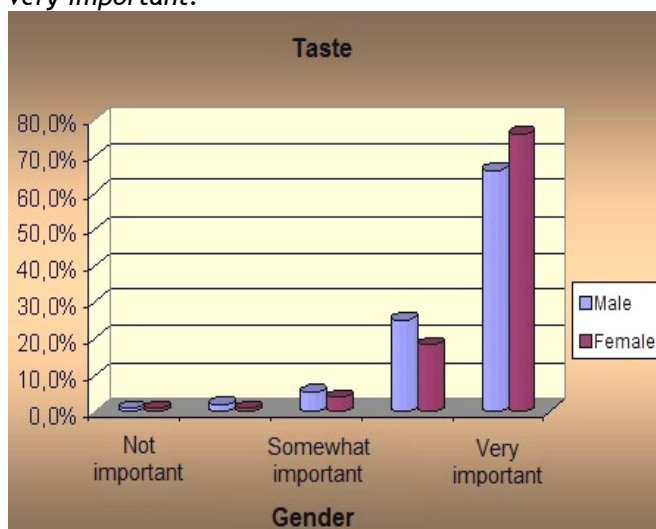


Figure 1: Assessment of the importance of taste by gender

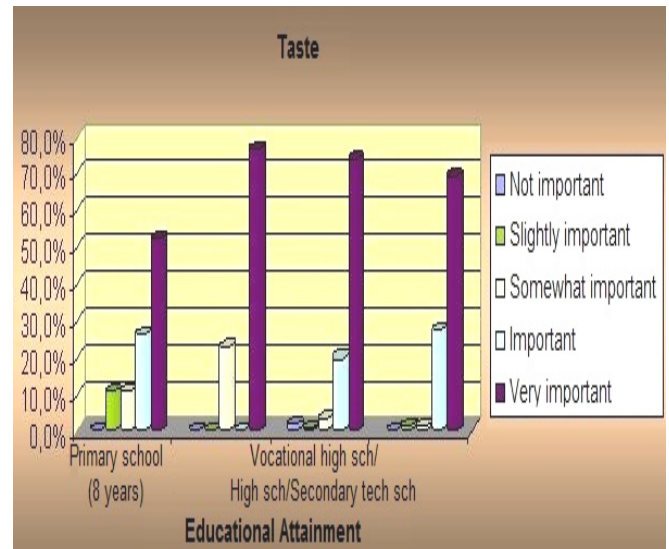


Figure 2: Assessment of the importance of taste by educational attainment

Assessment of the importance of tradition

The added value of unique, high quality, region-specific foodstuff is partly owing to their traditional nature.

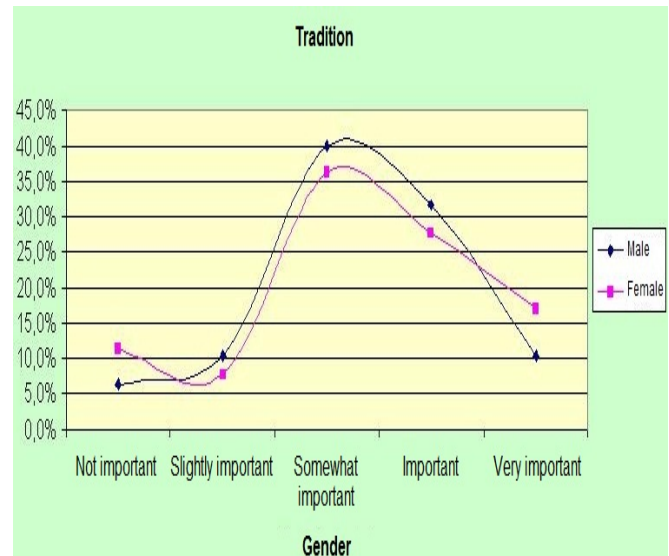


Figure 3: Assessment of the importance of tradition by gender

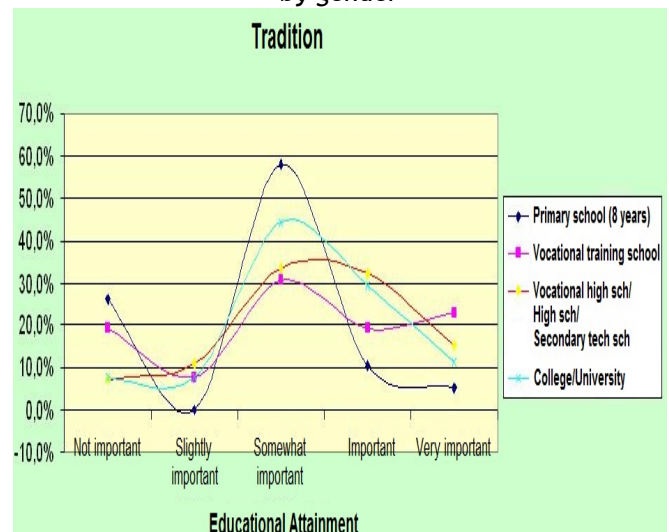


Figure 4: Assessment of the importance of tradition by educational attainment

As the specificity of a product does never originate only from a single component, the traditional nature also gains its significance in a specific component context.

All respondent segments evaluated this quality dimension as important or somewhat important. In a broader context, the traditional nature is a cultural asset and a certain consumer segment expects purchasables to have this added value.

Assessment of importance of the place of origin

The European Commission sets two criteria to differentiate regional products from other products. One such criterion is quality or fame attributable to the place of origin, the other is the identifiability of the product name with the place of origin.

The importance of the place of origin incorporates traditions and region-specific production technology. As shown above, the place of origin is a more important decision making factor for female consumers (59 percent) than for their male counterparts.

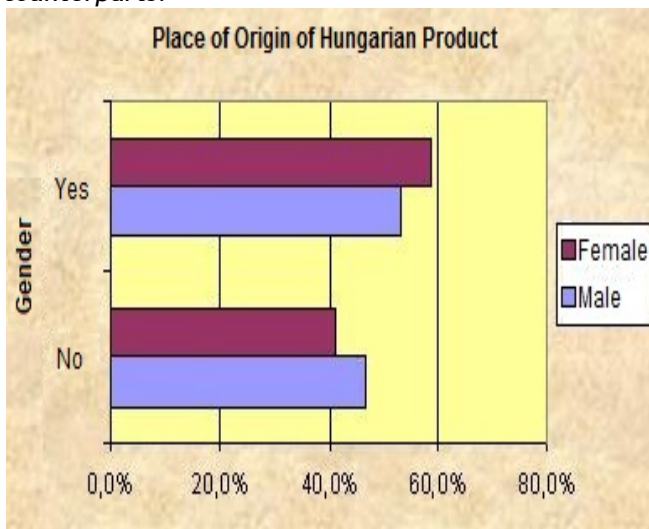


Figure 5: Assessment of the importance of the place of origin by gender

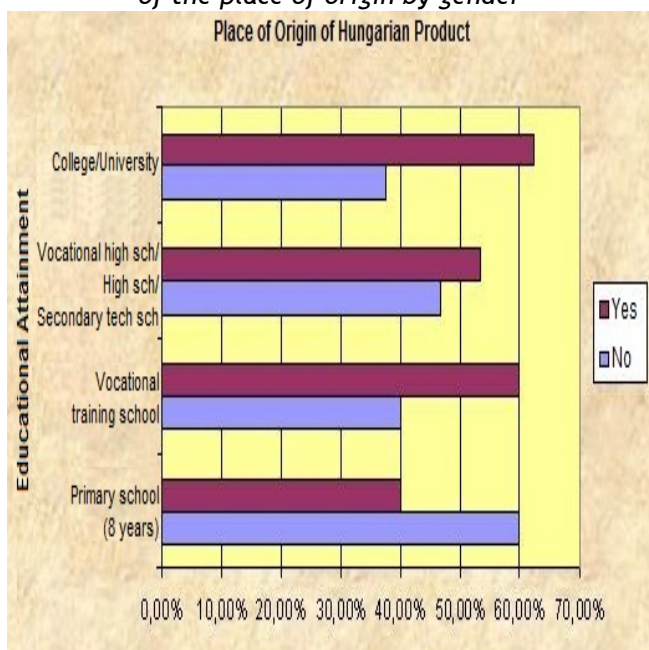


Figure 5: Assessment of the importance of the place of origin by age group

The assessment by age group points out that the place of origin plays an important role for seniors (over 60) in their purchase decisions. Figure 9 reveals that 60 percent of the respondents with low educational attainment do not take the place of origin into consideration for their purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- The significant changes in the attitude towards food consumption in the developed industrialized countries over the past decades have resulted in the modification of consumer habits as well; the purpose of foodstuff is no more primarily to cover our material needs but it is equally a source of pleasure (Deák et al, 2011). Succeeding on the overbought globalised market becomes more challenging, survival on the market requires novel methods, thus searching for new market gaps where products of special qualities can target special groups can be an alternative way of this succeeding.
- Beyond the perceivable characteristics, consumers also find the place of origin (the source region) and the traditional character of products important. “Traditional” means that the product looks back to least a ten-year-old history, which emphasises the importance of the time aspect. Analytical methods help little to assess the special characteristics of traditional and region-specific products but the consumer survey reveals that these factors play a significant role in the consumers’ judgement on value. The communication of these special values towards the consumers for the purpose of enhancing the profile and competitiveness of the products is of utmost importance. Special, traditional foodstuff has a lot to offer to the ever growing consumer segment which craves for products with embedded emotional messages. These emotional messages are to be conceived region-specifically and communicated in plain language.

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