

CONSUMPTION OF NATURAL JUICES: A COMPARATIVE MULTICRITERIAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The issue of consumption of specific food products, such as natural juices, is increasingly in the attention of both producers and marketing analysts. Predominantly, consumers from generations Y and Z (Millennials and IGen) are increasingly interested in quality food products that support health, proper nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. The research is based on some objective directions, and others subjective. On the consumption market, speculative capitalization is felt by producers who are tempted to deliver juices in accordance with the new subjective consumption requirements, but with minimum production costs.

The present paper considers the analysis of consumption preferences for natural juices, by young Romanian consumers, and constitutes a multicriteria market study using the survey. The results indicate that, in most cases, consumers do not know the content of what they are consuming, but they prefer juices that present a complete image of naturalness. The study was carried out through a market investigation, based on a questionnaire, applied at national level, and the results were based on a multivariate factorial analysis.

Key words: consumption preferences, natural juices, influence, speculation, healthy needs

The consumption of secondary food products, that is, those that do not directly satisfy nutritional requirements and are based more on the desire to consume, is increasing rapidly. Juices are one of these products, and consumption is present in almost all age groups. The issue we raise for analysis is the motivation for juice consumption, with an emphasis on the differentiation between natural juices and those that have no connection with the concept of "natural". The reality of the markets indicates: the topic related to consumption of specific food products, such as natural juices, is increasingly catching the attention of producers and marketing analysts, but also of consumers.

A relevant aspect for the analysis of the consumption of food products that are not strictly necessary is that of the social age categories in the modern approach: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z. Is important that the analysis of food consumption, particularized in this paper on natural juices, be done by social age categories, considering the society and economic period from which they come, because depending on these, consumption preferences and goals in life are different. From this perspective, it is observed that, predominantly, consumers from generations

Millennials and Z are increasingly interested in quality food products that support health, proper nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Another concept: the preference, a widely debated topic in specialized studies. Preference is a concept of psycho-social origin, because it is supported by influencing factors that relate to both the consumer himself and the environment, he is part of. Thus, both for the producer and for defining individual objectives it is extremely important to know "why" a certain type of food product is preferred for consumption. Natural juices are within the scope of these consumption concerns, and the analysis is based on several varied criteria. Preference is a consequence of perception, so a preference analysis study also involves perception analysis, that is, "what the consumer thinks", "what he sees/seems", "what he hopes" when he is oriented towards a certain product. For the food products, perception of the importance of the quality of food products consists in: consumer satisfaction, pleasure of consumption, market competitiveness assessed by price and brand, health guarantee, etc.

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

Concerns for the analysis of food consumption, including reports of consumption patterns and balance sheets, are increasingly extensive and more elaborate, for at least two reasons: the food market is overcrowded with an impressive variety and diversity both quantitatively and qualitatively, respectively, the general health of the population indicates some concerns given the expansion of diseases associated with the style of food consumption. Therefore, the interest in knowing why individuals consume products that do not have a favorable impact on health or why they consume products of inferior quality or lacking nutritional intake has become increasingly acute.

Numerous current studies have focused on the conceptual analysis of food consumption based on social ages, which refers not only to the biological age of the individual, but also to the specificities of the generation to which he belongs. These categories are (Park G. *et al*, 2021):

- Baby Boomers: born between 1946-1964, appreciated as a generational archetype of "prophets" who have a clear consensus on the social order, with an emphasis on morality and solid and healthy principles of life;
- Generation X: born between 1965-1980, called "nomads" in the generational archetype; they are considered to be alienated adults, lacking the pampering of adults busy with social change;
- Millennials: born between 1981-1996, represent the "hero" archetype; it is a generation of pragmatism and individualism, they are very protected by their parents, becoming optimistic and energetic adults.
- Generation Z: born between 1997-2010, archetypically they are "artists" marked by an ethic of personal sacrifice.

Another concept associated with the previous one is that of consumption preference, which is found predominantly in the international marketing and consumer behavior literature, with the aim of understanding what makes an individual choose and consume one product over another. (Allen M.W., Ng S.H., 2004; Njite D. *et al*, 2008). According to Metcalfe (2001), "The shaping of preferences by firms would fall naturally into place in such a knowledge accumulation framework, so that the activities of firms in making markets take on a more positive role than is frequently assumed."

The autochthonous literature, as Lordache (2004) mention about the psychophysiological mechanism of consumer preference, explaining what determines the preference for a product or service. By preference we understand the final step of rational-emotional process completion, so the decision to purchase and consume a product.

Still for a long time, the international literature (Vaughn R., 1986) mention about the

strategies considered by producers and sellers to create the preference of consumers for a certain product. And, for the natural (or unnatural) juices there are no exception. In this regard, the grid is one of those models that can be used to explain the consumer involvement in the services or products procurement based on a preliminary preference induced with various attributes (price, taste, color, advertising, offers, habit etc.). The Company "Foote, Cone & Belding" based on the Vaughn theories introduces the FCB Grid, based on the main following strategies:

- *Information strategy*: for the important purchasing that needs a difficult decision;
- *Affective strategy*: specific for the products or services that stimulates or invigorate the ego and self-esteem;
- *Habit strategy*: products for daily routine that don't require much thought for decision;
- *Satisfaction strategy*: based on the social models and the impulse to show and the share the consumption experience.

Synthesising and focusing on the natural juices consumption, the preferences issue means:

- aware of the importance of a healthy diet, the consumers are increasingly interested in the impact of their diet on their health;
- in search of convenient and nutritious alternatives, the preference for natural juices is perceived as a quick and healthy solutions for busy and dynamic lifestyles;
- quality of the source/producer and retailer are considered, consumers being aware of the importance of the source of juices;
- the essential characteristics of natural juices are: authenticity, freshness, nutrient content;
- the nutritional benefits of natural juices are: concern for health, nutritionally balanced, alleviating hunger in diets, pleasure.

This paper consists in an analysis of consumption preferences for natural juices, by Romanian consumers, from the Millennials generation. It is based on multicriteria market study and investigation. The tool used is the questionnaire, applied at national level, and the results were based on a multivariate factorial analysis. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the consumer preferences and their influence on the dynamics of the natural juice market. The main objectives: O1. identification of preferred types of natural juices and frequency of consumption; O2. analysis of motivational factors of consumption.

Methodologically, the paper is a quantitative analysis, a descriptive and correlative one, based on a market survey on a sample of 120 people, aged 18-45, with varying levels of education and income. For application Google Forms platform and pen-and-paper method were used.

A priori hypothesis formulated based on the previous observations:

H1. in most cases, consumers do not know the content of what they are consuming, but they prefer juices that present an image of naturalness;

H2. the motivation to consume is in conflict with actual consumption, since although they seek health, the subjects predominantly consume “unnatural” juices;

H3. consumption preferences are rather based on reference to the external environment, such as areas of consumption and marketing sales techniques, influence of social groups, price, etc. and much less on personal beliefs and intrinsic values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the responses collected from the 120 available questionnaires, the most relevant results are below, by mentioning 6 questions with the corresponding answers and interpretation.

The profile of the respondents obtained through the processing of the recorded data is: 18-25 years age (85.1%), under 1500 lei income (47.1%), female (76.9%), university studies (46.3%) as educational level. For each table, the sources are the results of the authors' processing of the collected data. The questions selected as relevant for the analysis of preference and motivation among millennials have as variables: fruit categories for consumed juices, favorite brand, frequency of consumption, place of purchase, determinant attributes of the purchase decision, reaction to future consumption in case of financial constraint.

Q1. Types of natural juices consumed. As it can be observed in *table 1*, the ranges are as follows.

Table 1
Fruits preferred for the juices taste

Oranges	71.1%
Peaches	47.1%
Apples	47.1%
Grapefruits	20.7%
Ananas	20.7%
Strawberries	26.4%
Kiwi	5.8%
Bananas	5.8%
Other as pears and cherries	0.8%

It can be noted that almost exclusively orange juices are preferred, most likely being present on the market due to easier production or cost-effective production costs, and the appreciated taste and the favorable contribution to health.

Q2. Favorite natural juice brands. As it can be observed in the *table 2*.

Table 2

The favorite brand

Cappy	38.8%
Tymbark	24.8%
Santal	19.8%
Prigat	9.9%
Granini	5%
Others: Solevita, Nestea, etc.	1.7%

The preferred brands: Cappy, followed by Tymbark. One of the most interesting aspects of these preferences is that, from a qualitative point of view, these brands are far more oriented towards the production of natural juices, at least compared to Santal or Granini. Thus, the preference is most likely induced by the influence of price and the intensively used promotional means.

Q3. Frequency of natural juice consumption. The responses obtained indicate the following consumption frequencies (*table 3*):

Table 3

Frequency of consumption

2-3 times a week	36.2%
Occasionally	28.4%
Once a week	25.8%
Daily	9.6%

It can be seen that young people from the Millennial generation do not consume juices with great frequency (without considering them to be natural), only 9.6% being those who consume them daily. Most consume them 2-3 times a week and occasionally (36% of these answers). This aspect seems to be beneficial for the health of young people, provided that the statements are honest and the difference between natural juices and other categories of juices is understood.

Q4. Place to buy natural juices. Given the predominant areas of sales and advertising of juices, we considered this question to be important, as the place where juices can be purchased can prove to be a stimulating factor for consumption. The results indicate, as it can see in the *table 4*.

Table 4

Place of purchasing the juices

Supermarkets	71.9%
Hypermarkets	14.9%
Convenience stores	11.6%
Other: small producers or an acquaintance	1.6%

Young millennials choose to buy natural juices mainly from supermarkets, most likely for proximity and ease of product identification on the shelf, respectively the purchasing process. Most likely, hypermarkets are located at a great distance, and convenience stores have higher prices.

Q5. Purchasing criteria. Regarding the criteria for choosing natural juices, that stimulate consumption preference, the results are noted in *table 5*.

Table 5
Purchasing and consumption criteria

Price	38%
Quality	33.9%
Offers	14.9%
Promotions	11.6%
Flavors	1.6%

Almost equally important in the preference for consumption of natural juices are: price – considering a very low price, quality - considering that respondents can differentiate between natural and unnatural juices, offers and promotions - as stimulating factors in food consumption.

Q6. Under financial constraints, will they still purchase their favorite natural juice brands?

Table 6
Continuing natural juices consumption in case of financial constraints

Less often	53.7%
Yes	33.9%
Totally	8.3%
Not at all	2.5%
Rarely	0.8%
No	0.8%

Regarding the correlation of age with favorite juice brands, the results indicate: Cappy & Tymbark are preferred by young people of 18–25-year-olds and, Cappy & Prigat by those of 25–35-year-olds. About the gender, females prefer orange & peaches, and the males prefer orange and apples.

CONCLUSIONS

The consumption of natural juices is a food priority among young people of the Millennial generation, but the recorded and processed responses show that this consumption occurs rather out of habit, on impulse or under the influence of social and marketing factors. However, the interest in consuming natural juices for taste pleasure or nutritional satisfaction is evident. A preference for quality and affordability is remarked, too, alongside the important role of supermarkets in promotion and distribution. On the consumption market, speculative capitalization is felt by producers who are tempted to deliver juices in accordance with the new subjective consumption requirements, but with minimum production costs.

Natural juices are within the scope of these consumption concerns, and its analysis requires and involves several varied criteria, being an interdisciplinary topic. The motivation to consume the natural juices it seen to be in conflict with the actual consumption, since although they want health, the subjects predominantly consume unnatural juices, and consumption preferences are rather based on reference to the external environment, such as areas of consumption and marketing techniques for sales, influence of social groups, price, sometimes addiction or habit, disabled awareness capacity, etc. and much less on personal beliefs and intrinsic values.

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