

CONSUMER PERCEPTION REGARDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL PRODUCTS, BY CATEGORY OF CHARACTERISTICS

PERCEPȚIA CONSUMATORILOR CU PRIVIRE LA DIFERENȚELE EXISTENTE ÎNTRE PRODUSELE ECOLOGICE ȘI CELE CONVENȚIONALE, PE CATEGORII DE CARACTERISTICI

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Abstract. This study tried to get knowledge of consumer perception from Moldova area, towards differences between organic and conventional food products. It was performed on sample of 225 respondents and the data obtained from the survey were analyzed by SPSS version 20 program by chi-square test and correlation analysis. As a research method to quantitatively study used a questionnaire applied to their face to face by interviewers. The instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions, including four sections: filter questions, consumer behavior, perception differences between organic and conventional foods (common) and demographic characteristics. The main points of purchase organic products are: domestic market, supermarket and health food stores. Thus, a higher percentage of women (87.13%) believe that ECO foods are healthier than usual while a higher percentage of men consider them as equally or less healthy than usual (23%). In the taste of organic products, 70.09% of women believe that organic food is more tasty than usual compared to only 52.53% of the men.

Key words: perception, survey, organic products, conventional products

Rezumat. Acest studiu a încercat să scoată în evidență percepția consumatorilor din zona Moldovei, cu privire la diferențele care există între produsele alimentare ecologice și convenționale. Studiul a fost efectuat pe un eșantion de 225 de respondenți iar datele obținute din sondaj au fost analizate cu ajutorul unui program statistic, SPSS var. 20 pentru testul chi-pătrat și analiza corelației. Ca metodă de cercetare s-a folosit un chestionar, aplicat față în față pentru respondenți. Chestionarul a fost format din 14 întrebări, pe patru secțiuni: întrebări filtru, comportamentul consumatorului, diferențele de percepție între alimentele organice și convenționale (comune) și caracteristici demografice. Principalele puncte de produse ecologice de cumpărare sunt: piața internă, supermarket-uri și magazine alimentare de sănătate. Astfel, un procent mai mare de femei (87.13%) consideră că alimentele ECO sunt mai sanatoase decât cele convenționale, în timp ce un procent mai mare de bărbați consideră ca produsele ecologice sunt la fel sau mai puțin sănătoase decât cele obișnuite (23%). În ceea ce privește gustul produselor ecologice, 70.09% dintre femei cred că alimentele ecologice sunt cu mult mai gustoase decât cele obișnuite, comparativ cu doar 52.53% dintre bărbați.

Cuvinte cheie: percepție, chestionar, produse ecologice, produse convenționale

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of consumption must be presented and analyzed closely related with that of the need, the latter given regarding to the people needs, the economic units and institutions goods and services considered social scale.

Consumer behavior is a multidimensional concept designates that the overall approach, all acts decision made on an individual or group directly related to the collection and use of goods and services to meet current and future need, including decision-making processes that precede and determine these acts (Florescu, 2003).

Because the purchase is the result of interaction between the firm's activities and demographic characteristics, psychological and sociological consumer, it is essential for the company to understand their customers (Sasu, 2005).

Through consumption we will ensure the existence of people, satisfaction of the overall needs of the company and general development of the human personality. In a broader perspective, which includes consumption represents the needs of society, economic societies and institutions, as well as each individual.

We define consumption as an economic transaction consisting in the use of various goods and services - the damage, wear or incorporation into other products - to satisfy a need (Florescu, 2003).

Consumer behavior comprises all the actions involved in the selection, purchase, use and disposal of products or services. When people see an advertisement on TV, when you buy a pair of shoes, read a book or when you return and recycled glass packaging, they actually engage in consumer behavior.

Purchasing behavior and the less widely refer specifically to actions taken by consumers when deciding whether to buy or not to buy a product. Actual purchase decision is not adopted instant. It appears that the end result of a process sequence for a specific duration.

Behavior is always reported to a situation, a context, in this way situational influences occur as a result of factors beyond consumer or object (product) consumer behavior. Situational influences involving both subject (the consumer) and the object (product), being inherent in a given situation.

In analysis of consumer behavior marketers need to consider the following features: consumer behavior is dynamic, there are very few absolute rules of human behavior, consumer behavior determines interactions being necessary to know what consumers think (perception), I feel (feeling) and they do (behavior), and what are the factors that influence (environment) determines consumer behavior exchanges between participants in the sale, consumers are very different from each other, consumers act emotionally rather than rationally and act different distinct points in time consumer behavior can be influenced, it can learn and can change attitudes and behavior.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Assumptions on which the present paper gone, has in view the following aspects:

a) Among people from Iasi there are many perceptual stimuli.

- b) Investigation of consumer perceptions of organic products from lasi.
- c) The perception of people differ according to gender, age, education, income, occupation or socio-professional category.
- d) Is there a connection between perception of people and age, income or socio-professional category.

To achieve the goal of this paper were fixed a series of objectives consistent with the assumptions stated above.

- a) To find out the perception of people from lasi regarding the consumption of ecological products.
- b) To find out whether people's perception differs by gender, age, income, occupation or socio-professional category.
- c) To find out if there is a link between the perception of people and age, income or their socio-professional category, and alternative lifestyles.
- d) Assessing perceived by the population difference between organic and conventional vegetable production, in terms of evaluation criteria: taste, aroma, appearance, shelf life, health impacts and price.
- e) Assessing the integration of ecological vegetable consumption of products.

Population and sampling. The total population of lasi is 316 716, from which about 150 776 are men (48%) and 165 940 are women (52%) (Statistical Yearbook, 2007). The target market consists of people who have reached the age of 18 years (243 760 people) in urban areas, regardless of education, education, ethnicity, or religion.

To study the concept of perception from lasi, it was chosen as the method data collection, quantitative research through investigation. The instrument used for this research is the questionnaire and it administration was based on an interviewer. The questionnaire will be applied on a sample of 225 individuals from lasi.

The questionnaire includes 14 questions and is divided into two sections. Questions need to answer a series of well-defined features such as: easy to understand, that does not contain words that can not be understood by the respondents; are stimulants, that incite answer questions; to be precise, responses that lead to light and allow proper data processing.

The first section of 7 questions, concerns gender, age, education, income of family members, marital status and type of dwelling; to find out the gender and education were used nominal scales and for finding the age, the income, marital status and type of dwelling were used interval scales; questions on education and age were processed for under Romanian market characteristics; for finding the number of family members we used the open type question. Those two items concerning occupation and socio-professional category of people will demonstrate whether or not there is a connection between the concept of perceptual and occupation of persons and / or category to which they belong.

The second section, all 7 question concerns the perception and consumption of people, as it aims to find out respondents' perceptions about the consumption of ecological products.

Although it seems that the questionnaire is relatively small compared to what he wants to demonstrate, the questions are addressed in the way, that they can find important information on consumer perception of the organic vegetable products they use, and the reactions they have at the appearance of other new products.

The most mentioned differences between organic and conventional vegetables are artificial substances content, because they are healthier and tasty. Over 80% of respondents considered that organic vegetables are healthier than the usual ones. Over 60% believe that organic products are more tasty and goes bad faster than the usual ones.

The research was carried out as follows dates:

Table 1

The study period on the consumers perception towards the organic vegetable products

Stage Research	Period
Conceiving the questionnaire	4 – 8 March 2013
Pretesting the questionnaire	11 – 15 March 2013
Training the operators and multiplication questionnaires	March 20, 2013
Data Collection	March 25-April 19, 2013
Creating the database	22 – 26 April 2013
Data analysis	6 – 10 May 2013
Drafting the report	13 – 15 May 2013

The difference most frequently mentioned by respondents is the content of artificial substances (category which included responses with reference to artificial fertilizer, artificial coloring), representing 24.15% of the answers. That are healthier and better quality is the difference representing 22.64% of the responses and tastier 20.38% of the answers (figure 1).

Respondents percentage: 33.68% of the respondents said that the difference between organic and regular products vegetable is the artificial substances content, 31.58% mention the quality of organic vegetables and 28.42% mention that the organic products are healthier and tastier.

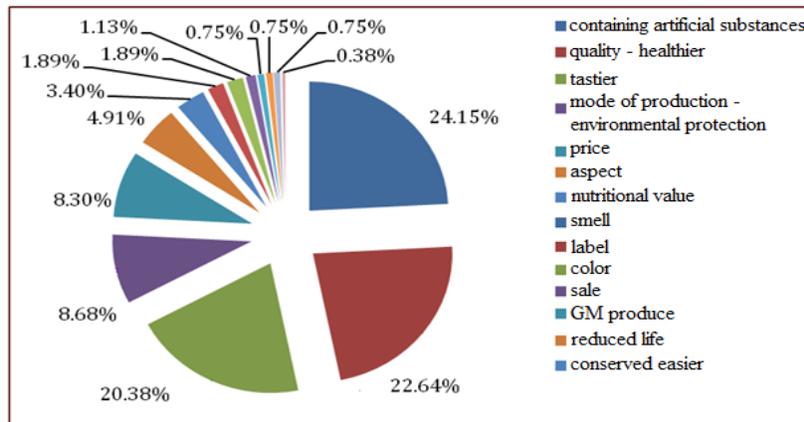


Fig. 1- Consumer perceptions between conventional and organic vegetable production

The results show that, from the point of view of the consumer appearance is not a clear difference between the organic vegetables and the normal ones. 45.74% of the respondents answered that the two categories of products have an equally pleasant aspect. 30.32% answered that organic vegetables have a more than pleasant aspect and 23.94% have a better look. The results are supported by those obtained previously analyzed question where appearance is referred to as the difference between the two product categories only 6.84% of respondents (figure 2).

The situation is quite different, however, when people are asked which of the two categories of foods are healthier, 82.09% believe that organic vegetables are healthier than the usual. A clear difference is observed in the case of the criterion of durability. Thus, 62.77% of the respondents consider that organic vegetables goes bad quickly than the normal, goes bad fast than the normal 21.28% and 15.96% goes bad harder than usual.

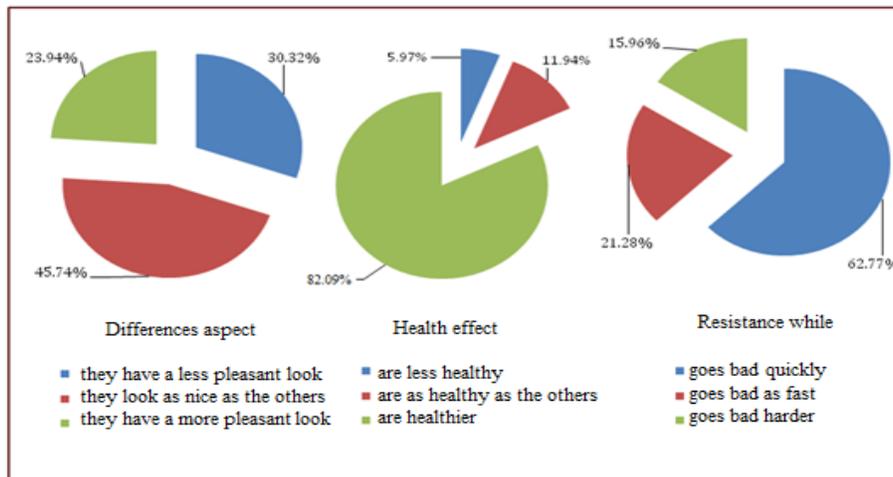


Fig. 2 - Perception of organic vegetables from the appearance, strength and nutritional value

Organic vegetables flavour is a feature that they are positive different from the usual 44.74% of the respondents said so. 34.21% believe that the two categories are as flavorful as the others and 21.05% that vegetables are less flavorful. In terms of taste, 61.65% of respondents believe that vegetables are tastier than usual, 22.82% consider them as tasty as the others and 15.53% consider them less tasty (figure 3).

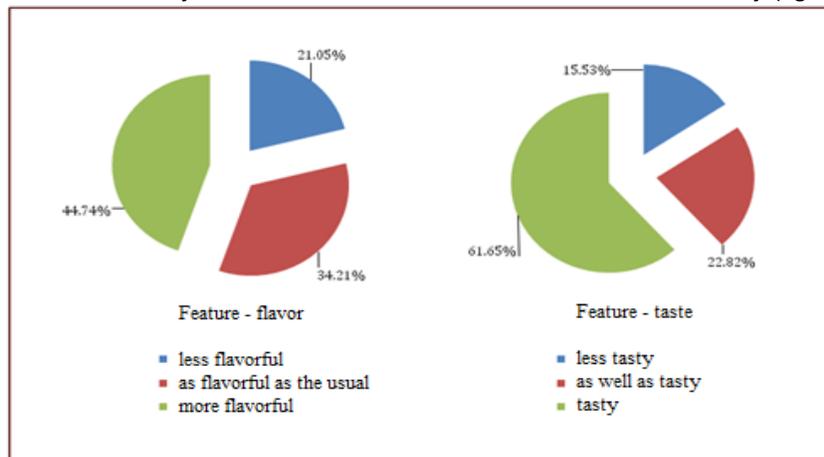


Fig. 3- Perception of organic vegetables by taste and aroma

CONCLUSIONS

1. The difference most frequently mentioned by respondents between organic and conventional vegetables is the content of artificial substances, representing 24.15% of the answers.

2. Regarding the aspect of the vegetables, 45.74% of the respondents answered that the two categories of products have an equally pleasant aspect, 30.32% answered that organic vegetables have a more than pleasant aspect and

23.94% answered that have a better look.

3. 82.09% believe that organic vegetables are healthier than the usual.

4. 44.74% of the respondents said that organic vegetables flavour is a feature that they are positive different from the usual.

5. In terms of taste, 61.65% of respondents believe that vegetables are tastier than usual, 22.82% consider them as tasty as the others and 15.53% consider them less tasty.

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