

ANALYSES OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES ON HUNGARIAN GAME MEAT MARKET (Preliminary report)

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Abstract

The ecological capabilities of Hungary are particularly favorable for agricultural and food production. The production of special agricultural goods e.g. as the meat of game animals can be a real alternative for mass production. In our recent study the habits and attitudes of consumers were analyzed in context of natural, high added value, healthy and environment friendly animal products: the meat of game animals. Our aim was to map the consumer requests, the demand as well as the main objectives of the market. The results represent a descriptive picture on the acceptance, rejection, attitudes and preferences concerning the given product categories. Data were collected by questionnaires. In the recent paper we focused on the following species: red deer, fallow deer, roe deer, wild boar, hare, pheasant and mallard duck. The game meat consumption was estimated by the official statistics and results of the study. Differences were found between the answers of the asked sample population living in cities and in the rural areas. Those people who have a negative attitude to game meat are vegetarian or refuse consumption due to emotional reasons. The culture and tradition of game meat cooking in Hungarian cuisine is very old. The most important traits of the meat are the game species, quality, freshness and price.

Key words: consumer, game animals, meat market, Hungary

In the last years the position of Hungarian meats decreased on the national market due to several reasons e.g. free movement of products in EU market and the actions for propagating healthy alimentation often present the consumption of meat in negative meaning (GFK, 2007).

The consumption of game meats in Hungary is less than 1kg/capita/year. Hunters and their families eat game meat frequently, but most of the people are not familiar with it (GFK, 2003). The importance of the traditional culinary habits is decreasing step by step on weekdays, and eating became satisfaction of requirements without formalities for a part of consumers. At the same time they are looking for the traditional styles of nourishment as sources of experiences. The classification of consumers can be done by several different ways. One part of the people would like to have special meals and eating out (gourmet), while the semi-finished or ready-made products (e.g. fast-food) are preferred by others. The health-conscious groups are seeking for fresh and natural foodstuff as guarantee of health or trust in high-tech based products (Horváth et al., 2005).

The habits of consumers can be influenced with marketing as it was in the case of fish consumption in the last ten years. Unfortunately nowadays people choose food not on the nutritional value, but the price and the value of delight (colour, taste, etc.) have the greatest effect (Nagy et al., 2008). The ingredients of different game meats were studied and their importance in alimentation was confirmed by Lugasi (2006).

Market analysis of the rabbit meat, beef (Szakály et al., 2009) and game meats are similar they belong to the products of special niche markets and through their health conditioning features their marketing can be placed on common strategic bases.

The aim of our research is to map the consumer requests, attitudes and preferences concerning the game meat market. The goal of the recent study was to optimize the questionnaire and the research methods by the experiences of the first 200 interviews before the beginning of the countrywide survey.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to obtain the information a survey of questionnaire was designed and carried out. During the survey people were asked ($n=200$) about their shopping habits and attitudes. Data were collected with random walking method from different settlement types in Csongrád county. The data recording was carried out through face-to face interviews. The population segment above 18 years of age had equal chances to get into the group of interviewees. Due to the relatively small size of the sample group the compositions of the data were distorted, so the survey can not be regarded as a representative one, but the data of further study will be corrected, if it will be necessary.

The questionnaire contained 31 questions mostly closed ones, in some cases interval scale was applied. To make some answers more exhaustive free contextual answers could also be given. The questions were focused on the following areas:

- personal information about respondent people (sex, age, type of settlement, level of qualification, profession, hunting activity),
- opinion about game meat consumption (consumption habits, causes of preference or rejection), the frequency was scaled with intervals: 1- per year, 2- per half year, 3- in every 3 months, 4- in every month, 5- every week;
- opinion about different game meats (preference of species: mallard duck, pheasant, hare, roe deer, wild boar, mouflon, fallow deer, red deer; opinion about ingredients, value of delight,
- places of shopping,
- form of purchasing meat and meat products,
- opinion about meat prices,
- information about cooking and preparation,
- effects which can increase consumption.

Data obtained were submitted to statistical analysis by using SPSS 15.0 software package. Results were expressed as proportions and frequency distributions of the analyzed sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the survey slightly more women (53%) were asked than men. The age distribution shows that less elder people were asked (*fig. 1.*). The places of living of the sample population are

the towns (43%) and villages (57%) of Csongrád county, but the answers did not differ between the two type of settlements. The groups aggregated by the level of qualification represented 18% primary school, 43% high school and 39% college or university degree. They have physical (42%) and intellectual (58%) professions and jobs. The hunters are over represented in the survey (7 persons, 3.5%), because only 0.5% of the Hungarian inhabitants has hunting licence.

Most of the people who ate already or used to eat game animals ($n=176$). Almost all hunter men ate every species, but most of the people choosed only one, which is their favourite, easy to get and/or cheap. The distribution of game species (*fig. 2.*) was coming from the characteristic of the county, because most of the hunted species in this region are small games. All the consumers described the game meat healthy and natural sources of protein and minerals, but the questions about ingredients (protein, fat and mineral content) should be modified, because the number of inadequate responds demonstrated insufficient information on this field.

The main causes of rejection of game consumption were the following:

- vegetarian lifestyle,
- unfavourable, special taste of the meat,
- emotional reasons,
- do not know how can it be prepared,
- fear from different diseases and bad hygienic status.

The wild boar meat has the greatest risk by the opinions, because of the possibility of Trichinellosis.

High rate of people eat game meat, but most of them only at celebrations or at special occasions, except the hunters who prepare game almost at every weekends. The mean value of frequency was 2.86, which means that the average consumer eat game meat almost in every quarter of the year.

The value of delight (*fig.3.*) was measured by three different traits: appearance (e.g. shape, colour and sense of feeling), cooking features (tenderness, water holding capacity, etc.) and taste. The highest rating in all traits was given to the different type of deers, and they were found more special than the others. The most favoured, desired and popular meat specialities are red deer and fallow deer (24-26%).

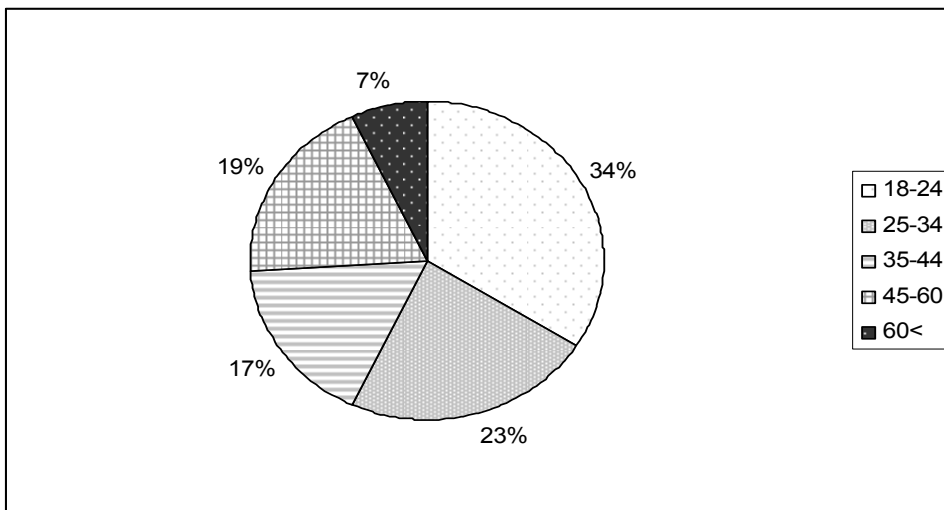


Figure 1 The age composition of the asked people (years)

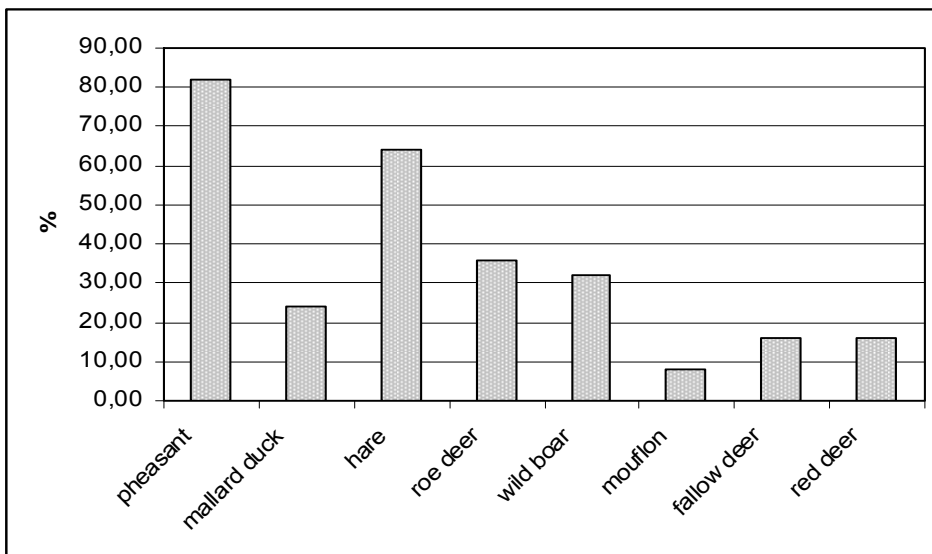


Figure 2 Consumed meat types - distribution by species

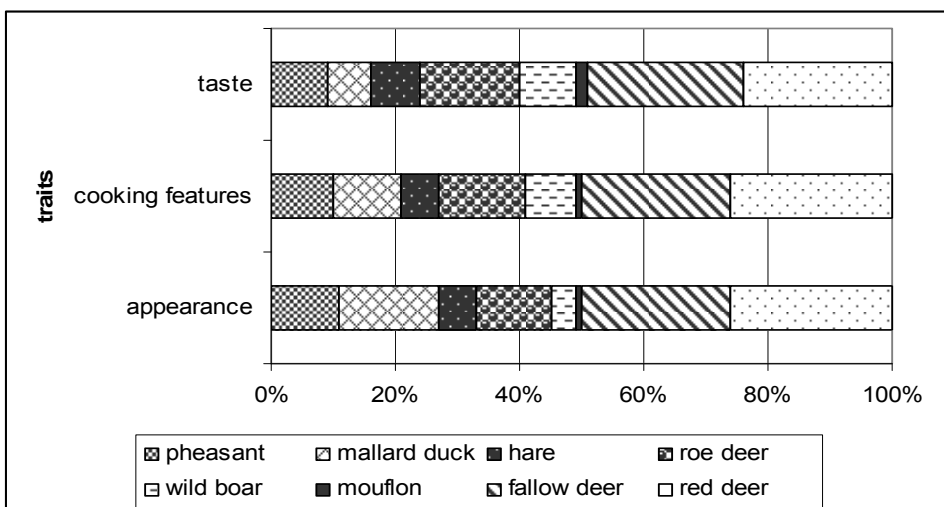


Figure 3 Value of delight - distribution by species

The type of meat were chosen by most of the consumers on the price, quality and appearance except the shopping habits of the section of 25-34 years old well educated intellectual men who are looking for specialties first of all in restaurants, and able to spend more money on curiosities. The preferences of the ladies were the reasonable price (between 1500-2500 HUF/kg), the skinless and eviscerated carcass. The women over the age of 45 years know more about the preparation of game meat, spend more time with cooking and they prefer to buy fresh meat directly from hunters and also from supermarkets. Everybody could listed at least 3 recipes. Younger ladies do not like or do not know how to prepare game meat, they prefer restaurants, semi-finished (e.g. chopped, marinated) or ready made products. Unfortunately there is not too large assortment of convenience game meat products can be found in the shops.

Almost all of the pheasants and hares were coming directly from hunters or their families and friends as fresh meat in skin to the table of consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

First of all some questions of the questionnaire should be modified and more information should be given to responding people (e.g. help in distinguish the deer species) before the survey will be continue.

Game meat is usually described as healthy and natural food and its consumption has a good effect on human nutrition.

Game meat is still curiosity for special events. 87.5% of the sample population eat game meat, but most of them buy it only 1-4 times a year directly from the hunter (the meat is always fresh, and the price is cheaper than in the supermarkets).

People need better information about game meat and about the ways of processing (recipes) and the increasing of domestic consumption seem

to be accessible. Our results fit to Péntes (2002) experiences: the customers are sensitive for prices on meat market, and they are looking for price reduction actions. Against this a demand of gourmand, ambitious and solvent young people appeared on the market that are willing to pay for convenient products or would like to eat out in restaurants.

The following nutritional and physiological characteristics practical to emphasize in marketing communication:

- the most lean meat, with low fat and cholesterol content;
- the game meat has the highest protein and iron content.

The marketing work can be ineffective only among the vegetarians and those who reject consumption due to emotional reasons.

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