

RESEARCH REGARDING THE TYPES OF EATING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS IN EUROPEAN AREA

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Abstract: While the differences between the Northern and the Southern countries tend to gradually fade, certain peculiarities still persist: in the north, a higher consumption of fats in the form of margarines or animal fats, and in the south, the consumption of fatty substances is mainly in the form of olive oil. Consumption of fruits and vegetables tends to become more uniform, with an increase in inputs in the north part. There are social differences in all countries and the fruits are less consumed in disadvantaged social environments.

Key words: eating behavior, consumers, Europa

INTRODUCTION

Enumerating the multiple functions that consumption has in society, its role and implicitly the need to study it are much better highlighted [7,11,15]. Analyzing all these functions of consumption, its final objective is highlighted, namely: to increase the standard of living and the quality of life, which unfortunately does not happen, in the consumption of all categories of products, because it is natural for any person or community to - seeks prosperity and freedom in the consumption of goods or services [2,5,12].

Knowing the needs of consumers can ensure the anticipation of future market reactions, because the production, the decisions and actions of entrepreneurs are always based on consumer needs and preferences [1,6,14].

The buying behavior of agri-food products has a number of peculiarities compared to the buying behavior manifested towards other categories of consumption, some of these particular aspects being specific to all categories of households, regardless of socio-demographic and economic characteristics [3,13].

Depending on the mentioned characteristics, there are several characteristics of the buying behavior but also consumption of agri-food products, by categories of households, characteristics such as: age, environment, sex, income, religion, social status, marital status, household size from which belongs the individual and implicitly the presence of children in the household, the group to which they belong, representing the main criteria for segmenting the agri-food market [4,8].

Lifestyle plays a very important role on the behavior of buying and consuming food but also the lifestyle of a person expressed in his activities, interests, and opinions [9,10].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to create this scientific paper, has been carried out research on the consumption of agri-food products at the level of some countries that are part of the European Union in order to determine the types of food consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At European level, a database has been created, in order to analyze the evolution of food consumption in different European countries. Several researches in this field have tried to better discern the eating habits of Europeans.

It can be exemplified by the Data Food Networking, which can be used to monitor the eating habits of ten European countries (Germany, Belgium, Finland, Spain, Greece, Italy, France, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Norway) in order to understand more accurately of the consumers' options, the monitoring being carried out in the form of gathering information that make up a regularly updated database.

These surveys and studies show the evolution of eating habits, which are not stable at all.

Analyzing the alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage sector, their consumption is higher in Northern and Central Europe. Wine is more popular in France and Germany, while beer is consumed more in Finland, and sour drinks are more consumed in Norway and the United Kingdom.

It can be seen that analyzing the evolution of the consumption of agri-food products, were registered both increases and decreases depending on the type of products (figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Agri-food products whose consumption has increased

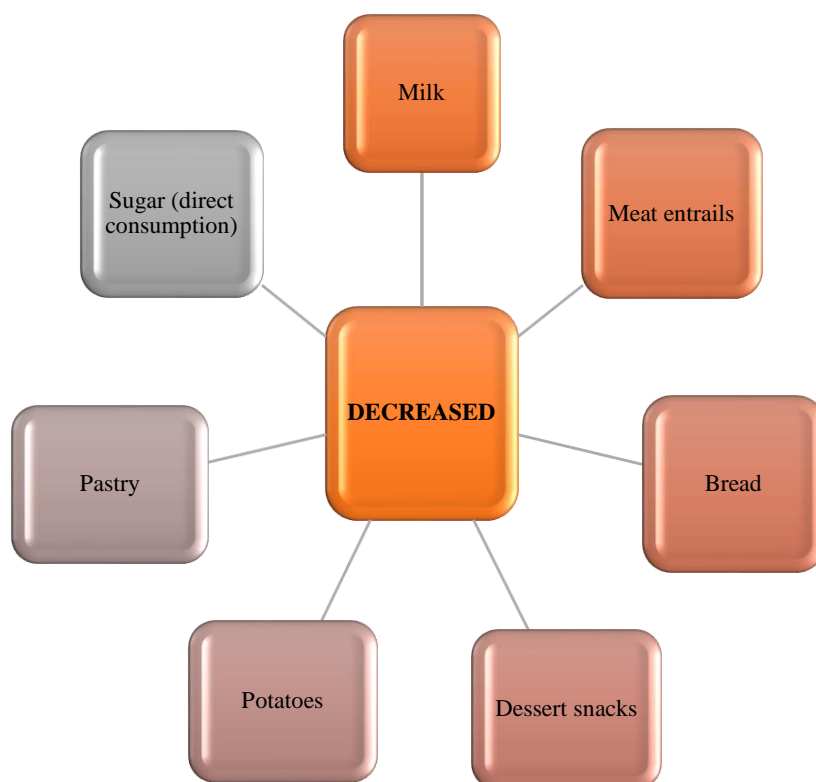


Figure 2. Agri-food products whose consumption has decreased

It can be seen that large groups of Euroconsumers have been defined, so that the former corresponds to those who buy a variety of foods, fruits and vegetables, meat, cereals, dairy products and fish,

Retired persons have an increased tendency to integrate into this group, as opposed to those in the workforce who are less respectful of diversification recommendations.

The second group presents as characteristics the purchase of already prepared foods and drinks but also through a lower consumption of vegetable foods, we can mention that the inhabitants of urban and semi-urban areas are rather part of this group, as well as the family with children.

All these studies that have been undertaken, of course, offer only a partial picture because the individual, social and cultural peculiarities are very large. In the case of France, for example, various official bodies have the task of observing the evolution of the food consumption of the population at home and at work.

Analyzing the situations of developed countries, it can be seen that there have been a number of trends that have left their mark on both consumer behavior in general and consumer behavior of agri-food products in particular. First of all, the rising standard of living of the population has shifted the need to eat to the pleasure of eating, so that people are willing to pay more to satisfy their various tastes, and creativity plays an important role in choosing food as and in their preparation.

On the background of this trend, have been identified a number of changes in the eating behavior of individuals, namely:

- consumers of agri-food products are looking for convenience when it comes to buying food, so large supermarkets and hypermarkets are preferred, as they have a diverse offer for all categories of food, so they are increasingly given up, to the supply within the specialized stores, due to the high consumption of time;

- consumers of agri-food products who are looking for convenience in food preparation, referring to those foods with a high degree of processing, which are easy to prepare in the shortest possible time;

- are generally preferred nutritionally balanced products, which are superior in terms of quality, having special sensory properties;

- increases the share of the consumption of nutritional products in the population, meaning those products that have undergone changes in their chemical composition through certain reductions, enrichments, or replacements of one or more constituents, as a result of the increased interest in ensuring good health;

- is pursued especially the pleasure of consuming mainly on weekends, in which case those products are sought that satisfy any whim in this field;

- foods containing ingredients known nationally or regionally are preferred, as well as traditional foods;

- are preferred agri-food products in small packages, due to the desire to diversify food, tastes and various preferences of household members, on the one hand due to the reduction of the average size of households;

If we aim to classify food consumers into different groups, we can talk about six specific typologies (figure 3):

- **Small diversified consumers**, with following characteristics:
 - mainly women, up to 45 years old, belong to this group;
 - products composed of dairy products, vegetables, cereals, legumes, with insignificant additions of meat and animal fats are generally consumed;
 - a very high consumption of fruits, these being consumed regularly.

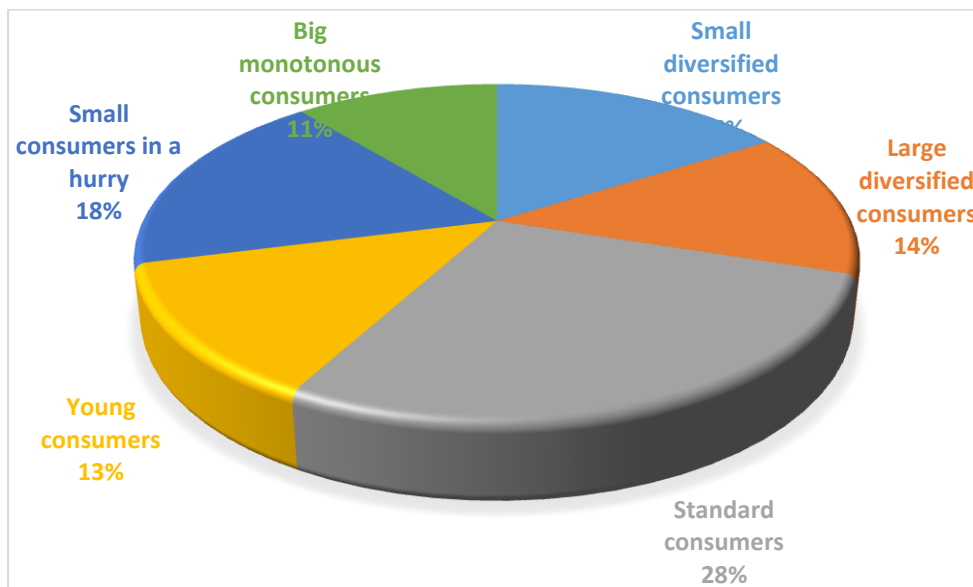


Figure 3. Types of Euroconsumers

- **Large diversified consumers**, with following characteristics:
 - mainly men, aged between 25-54, belong to this group;
 - meat, bread, sauces and sugary products are frequently consumed;
 - quite high sociocultural environment.
- **Standard consumers**, with following characteristics:
 - most people in this group are adults;
 - have a diet considered traditional.
- **Young consumers**, with following characteristics:

- mostly men, aged between 18-34, belong to this group;
- they do not pay too much attention to their diet;
- they also consume biscuits, pasta, sour juices, this does not cause them any worries.
- **Small consumers in a hurry**, with following characteristics:
 - mostly young women are part of this group;
 - food diversification is not a feature;
 - generally consumes cooked food quickly, already cooked that can be eaten immediately, as well as bakery products.
- **Big monotonous consumers**, with following characteristics:
 - most of those in this group are men, with a relatively low socio-educational level;
 - consumes fatty products in general, especially sausages;
 - such a diet poses health risks.

CONCLUSIONS

In the studies undertaken have identified two large groups of Euroconsumers, the first of which includes consumers who buy a variety of foods, fruits and vegetables, meat, cereals, dairy products and fish, retired persons have an increased tendency to integrate into this group, unlike those in the workplace and the second group of consumers buy ready-made food and drinks, in their case we are talking about a lower consumption of vegetable foods.

Taking in consideration another criterion for the classification of European food consumers, six groups were identified: diversified small and large consumers - the first two groups, the next two included standard and young consumers and the last two groups included hasty small consumers and large monotonous consumers.

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