HABIT OF EATING FOREST FRUIT AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL FACTORS

OBICEIUL DE A CONSUMA FRUCTE DE PĂDURE ŞI IMPACTUL FACTORILOR SOCIALI

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Abstract: *The paper aims to present the social factors that influence the forest fruit consumption in urban area based on a survey conducted in 2009. The results show that the most important when choosing to buy and eat fresh forest fruit is the physicians' opinion. The results could be used by businessmen in communication campaigns for their products based on forest fruits.*

Keywords: *forest fruits, habit, urban inhabitants, subjective norms,*

INTRODUCTION

Consumer purchase and consumption habits influence the traders and producers. The latter by adjusting the supply will determine the increase of consumption [3].

In the case of fresh fruits an increase is needed almost in every country of the world. In Romania the fruit consumption is below the EU average [1] and the EU average is under the daily minimum recommended by the World Health Organisation [4].

In Romania a low supply with fresh forest fruit can be observed, because after 1990 the fresh forest fruit production is sold almost entirely abroad. The main reason is the lack of Romanian processing plants with high capacity.

In the same time Romanian consumer is constraint to buy local fresh forest fruit only in season from gatherers and off season imported up to 15 times more expensive than the local ones.

To help potential traders and producers, the aim of the paper is to determine in which measure the consumption of forest fruit is already a

habit and who are the social factors to influence the purchase and consumption in the urban area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is part of a larger one included in a PhD thesis [2] and was realized on 243 forest fruit consumers from Cluj Napoca city in October 2009. The conventional sampling was used for the sample. Here are presented and discussed the answers regarding the habit to consume forest fruit and the social factors that influence the consumption of these fruits. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 and MS Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With the statement "Eating forest fruit is part of my habit" (Figure 1) over 48% of the respondents agreed (over 38% agreed and over 9% totally agreed). Those who consider that eating forest fruit is not part of their habit form over 20% of the sample (over 16% not agree and over 3% totally not agree). While over 31% are undecided.

The fact that for near half of the respondents the forest fruit consumption is considered a habit means that forest fruits are consumed with regularity and probably together with their families. Also the result shows that for one of five consumers the forest fruit consumption is not considered a habit, probably because they do not have a special preference for this type of fruits.

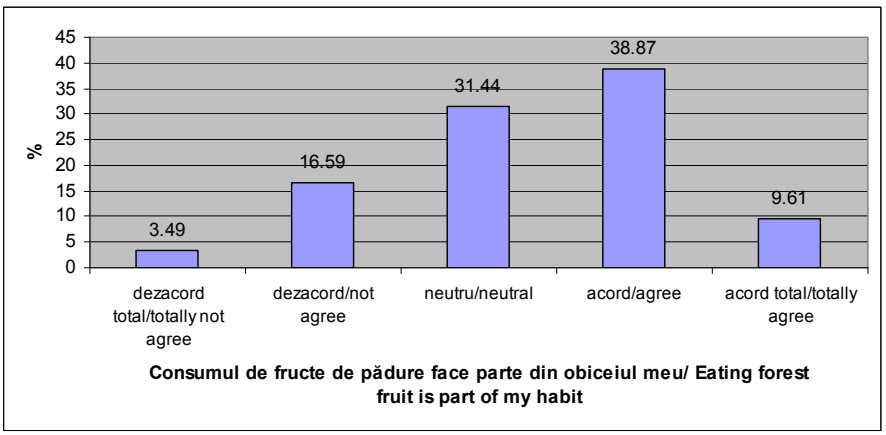


Fig. 1 Consumption habit for forest fruit

Another aspect watched in the study was the importance given to the influence of the social factors when choosing to consume forest fruits. The considered social factors are: family members, friends, physicians, media, food industry and National Forest Administration Romsilva (Figure 2).

The opinion of the family regarding the forest fruits consumption is considered important and very important by 74% of the respondents. For more than 14% are not important and more than 11% are undecided. The friends' opinion is considered by more than 44% of the cases, for 23% does not matter and 23% do not know.

Physicians' opinion is important for 41% of the respondents and very important for 38%. Only for 5% of the consumers this opinion is not important and for 15% is neither important nor unimportant

Information provided by media is important and very important for more than 30% of the respondents, is not taken into consideration by 38% and 38% are undecided.

Ideas released by food industry on the Romanian market are important for more than 40% of the consumers, are not important for 23% and for the other 36% is neither important nor unimportant. How about the marketing communication released by Romsilva, these are important and very important for more than 34% of the respondents, are not considered by other 34%, while 31% marked the variant "neutral".

These results show that when choosing to eat forest fruits, the most important opinion is those of the physicians. The physicians are best able to give advices regarding a healthy eating. The other influence entities are in the order of the importance family, friends, as personal sources of information and significant influencers of the consumption behaviour. Institutions opinion is less important, possible because these are not very involved in informing and educating the population. However the most important among them is the opinion of the food industry, while the opinion of media is not taken into consideration by about two thirds of the respondents. Maybe this is due to the multitude of the information disseminated, sometimes contradictory.

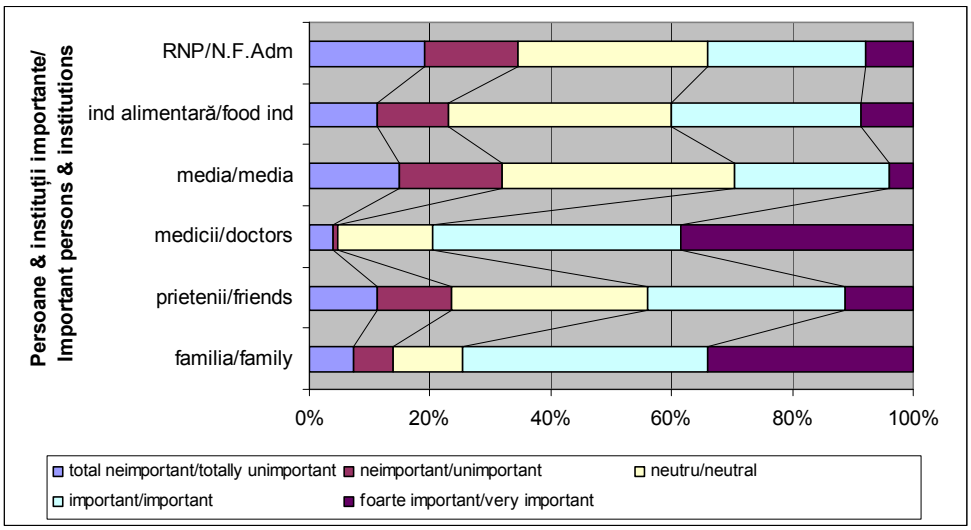


Fig. 2 Important persons and institutions that influence forest fruit buying decision

CONCLUSIONS

For almost half of the respondents to consume forest fruit is considered a habit. From the social factors considered in the study, that could influence the consumption habit, the most important are the physicians. This information could be considered by decision factors before new food products are introduced on the market.

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