CONSUMER APPRECIATION OF TRADITIONAL HUNGARIAN PRODUCTS' QUALITY

APRECIEREA CONSUMATORILOR A CALITĂȚII PRODUSELOR TRADIȚIONALE MAGHIARE

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Abstract: *Questionnaires were done for research of the local consumer evaluation aiming the topic of traditional horticultural products in the sphere of products in horticulture and food industry. We have three hypotheses: 1.The consumers are able to associate with messages bound up with characteristic, regional products. 2. In the decision-making process, in connection with the purchase and consumption of the consumer, the knowledge of the source of supply is an influential factor. 3. The product character of traditional horticultural products gives the chance to the consumer to acknowledge the excellent and individual feature of the product in a higher price, consequently, the higher price will be less influential factor in their decision-making process of the purchase. In the years 2008-2009 we conducted primary research on consumers of traditional horticultural products. According to the results it can easily be brought to light that the consumers select product not even on the basis of its price, appearance but rather on the basis of its particular taste and the excellent quality. The consumers regard - beside the perceptible attributes – the Hungarian provenance, place of origin and the traditional feature as an important aspect.*

Key words: *traditional product, sourcherry, onion, apricot*

1. INTRODUCTION

A region's competitiveness can be ensured basically by its features and the development of demand by utilizing the competences manifested in various areas. Under the concept of competence we understand the represented skills and expertises of a particular region and municipality. These refer to "connate" natural, geographical, historic, human capabilities; activities based on these; and the quality of operations.

Only a versatile, nationally significant and internationally recognized competitive region, with a specific image, is able to realize benefits based on differences in the production conditions. In this case, specialization may be the condition for economic growth. The higher degree of specialization, combined with efficiency of the resources used, the greater the economic growth is to be expected. The implementation of specialization is based on the principles of absolute and comparative advantages. The comparative benefits arise from the fact that a region is specialized in the production of certain products, which have the greatest comparative advantage in creation. As is the case in several European Union countries, in some rural areas of Hungary - where this is justified by the environmental conditions - the development and concentration of resources are focused especially on regional products (Szente at al., 2006). It supports the marketing of the local specialized foods and the advancement of the production sites. The "Terroir" is regarded as the local incarnation of permanence. The "place" is embedded into the product and this is the source of identity of the locally made product (Ilbery et al, 2007).

Today's contradiction is the "global-local paradox." While global competition is continually on the increase, companies are concentrated in regions where the local environment provides favourable conditions for competition in the industry. The reason is that between the long-term corporate competitive advantages the locality based benefits provide increasing revenues (Herman et al.,2001).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1. MATHERIAL

In the years 2010-2011 primary research was conducted among the traditional horticultural products as well as among the food producers and consumers. The goal was the establishment of a representative sample. Before the survey for traditional Hungarian horticultural products was distributed to customers and consumers, we set up a sample plan in order to process, categorize and weigh the required data. 850 questionnaires were prepared and divided up. We subsequently entered into the system 672 pieces of questionnaire data.

2.2.METHOD

The market research studies were designed to acquire the necessary informational background for the decisions of the market, and to reduce the inherent risk in company's decisions. The advantage of the secondary data collection is that it helps to determine the specific task and thus the conditions for development of the primary research (Piskóti, 2002).
The primary information gathering means would ensure proper data collection, processing and evaluation, serving the aims of the researcher. The survey is the most widely used procedure, which allows the gathering of any type of information. The most important phase of the preparatory work was related to the research for determining the need for information.
The Stapel scale differs from the semantic differential scale in that it has one pole, and only one endpoint (Lakner, 2007). In our research using the Stapel scale, the respondents revealed by an adjective or descriptive indicator the extent to which the specific regional horticultural products grown in Hungary meet their satisfaction and the criteria for quality in the consumer's opinion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. SOURCHERRIES FROM KECEL

Recommended marketing tools for the management of the special quality with respect to sour cherries from Kecel based on the consumer's opinion about them (for details see Fig. 1.) are the communication of the specific processing and marketing methods. The package (100-200-500 g / dose): modernizing of the packaging to aid in fresh consumption as well as impulse buying, and ensuring that the integuments are suitable for displaying the product information, which shall include the place of origin, individual properties and the nutritional criterion to help facilitate consumption. For consumers, the most important features of the products are its excellent taste, long shelf life and versatility. They are less aware of its special quality. It is proposed that the appropriate marketing communicative subtitles be placed on the packages of the sour cherry. Producers would require assistance in order to have an image-oriented marketing strategy for the sour cherry from Kecel. It may be useful to establish a traditional goods trademark, which they would need to support financially as well. Hungarian communal agricultural marketing should locate the points where they could market these excellent Hungarian products.

3.2. APRICOTS FROM KECSKEMÉT

Proposed marketing tools to maintain and manage the special quality of apricots from Kecskemét are organising regional awareness-raising events with the focus being the communication of the goods and processed products and their benefits. For example, the product can be utilized in versatile ways. It is home-processed in bulk. Furthermore, the notoriousness of the product can be increased by presenting the area's traditional processing methods, along with the domestic products. The opinions of the respondents can be seen on Fig. 2.The raw and processed products should be highlighted with information to consumers emphasizing the origin and the unique flavour of the product. It must be initiated that the processors indicate the origin and the variety also on the large-scale products. In recent years, the sales structure of apricots' has changed significantly. Fresh consumption and export sales have been growing while pulp production has been reduced. We would need to plant late-ripening varieties suitable for fresh consumption and capable of sustaining dehydration because on the market these are the "gaps" where it would be possible to gain ground. In the Kecskemét region apricots are grown in large quantities because there is a large demand for them and the growers have significant professional dedication. They consider the development of a traditional product trademark important and would be willing to sacrifice from their own funds in order to finance it.

3.3. ONIONS OF MAKÓ

The opinions of the respondents can be seen on Fig. 2. In order to increase the sales of packed products, besides the indication of origin information, it is necessary to communicate the therapeutic effects and the possible uses of the product. It is necessary to convince the large food processors to indicate their products' origin on the label (for example, the product contains original onions from Makó or the product is made from Makó onions). Production of these special onions has decreased in Hungary because the dry-product-industry capacity has declined and, just as importantly, because fewer and fewer can afford the high production costs. The profitability of the product varies each year because of the unpredictability of the market. This product is suitable for demanding consumers, but the majority of lower earning consumers have a preference for a cheaper product. Thus it would be essential to provide the customer

with additional information about the unique properties of the high-quality Makó onions. If it is considered important, even they would sacrifice from their own resources for a distinctive product, which at the same time promotes regional Hungarian products.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In Hungary, one of the problems facing the Southern Great Plain is the fact that there are a relatively few number of homogeneous aspects determining widely known individual products, so they exist in isolation. However, numerous region-specific garden products are present here, which are suitable for the preservation of local traditions and the development of the region's image. The selection of the range of these products, effective management, and protection via the tools of an active marketing policy can actively help with the Southern Great Plain's positive image influence. Facilitating stabilization in the specialized production areas, strengthening of the local economy and improved consumer income, and the key elements of the Southern Plain region's marketing strategy could be those region-specific products (eg, Kecskemét's apricot brandy), which meet stringent standards and expectations. It is important that the region's unique products remain authentic Hungarian specialties, and behind the trademarks the constant guarantee of quality is upheld.

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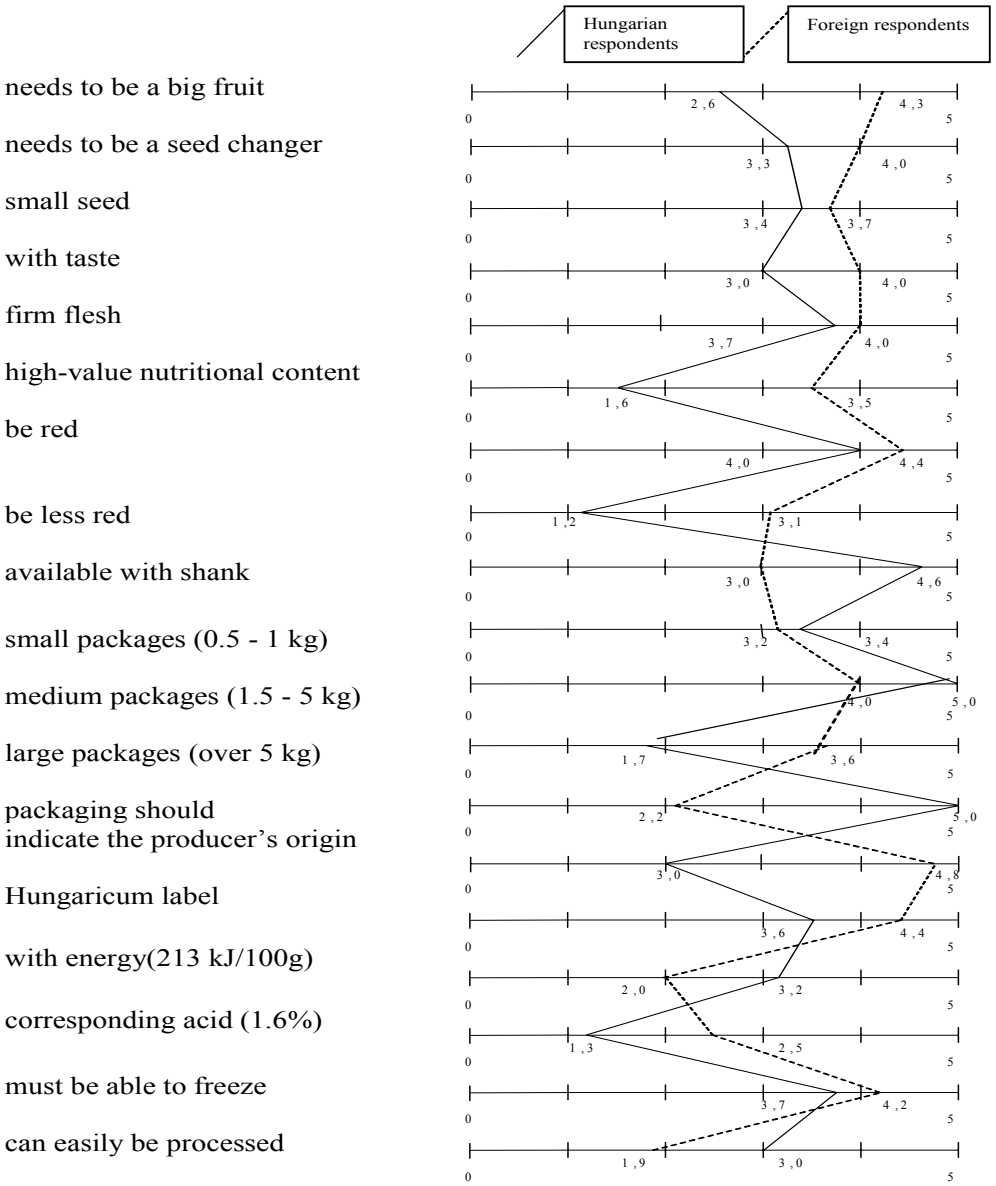


Fig. 1. Consumer's opinion about the quality of the sour cherry from Kecel in Hungary

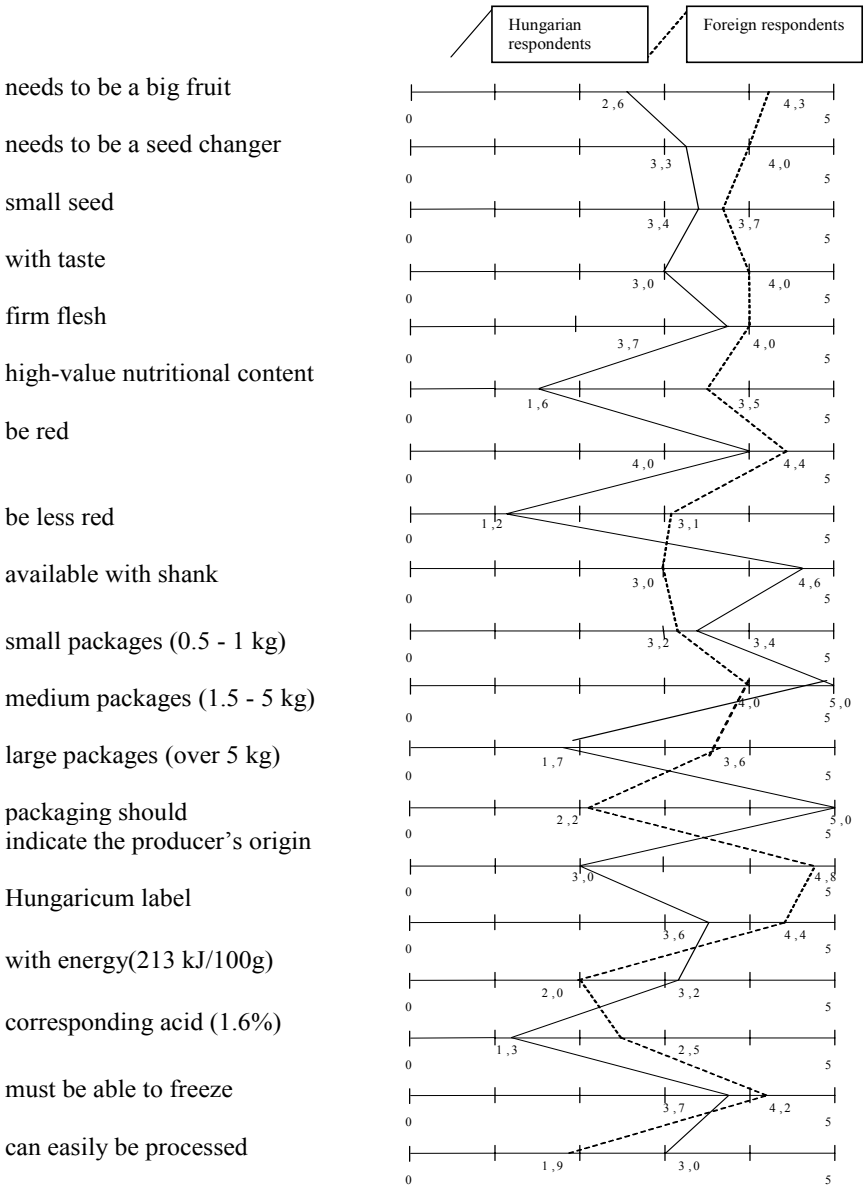


Fig.2. Consumer's opinion about the quality of the apricot from Kecskemét in Hungary

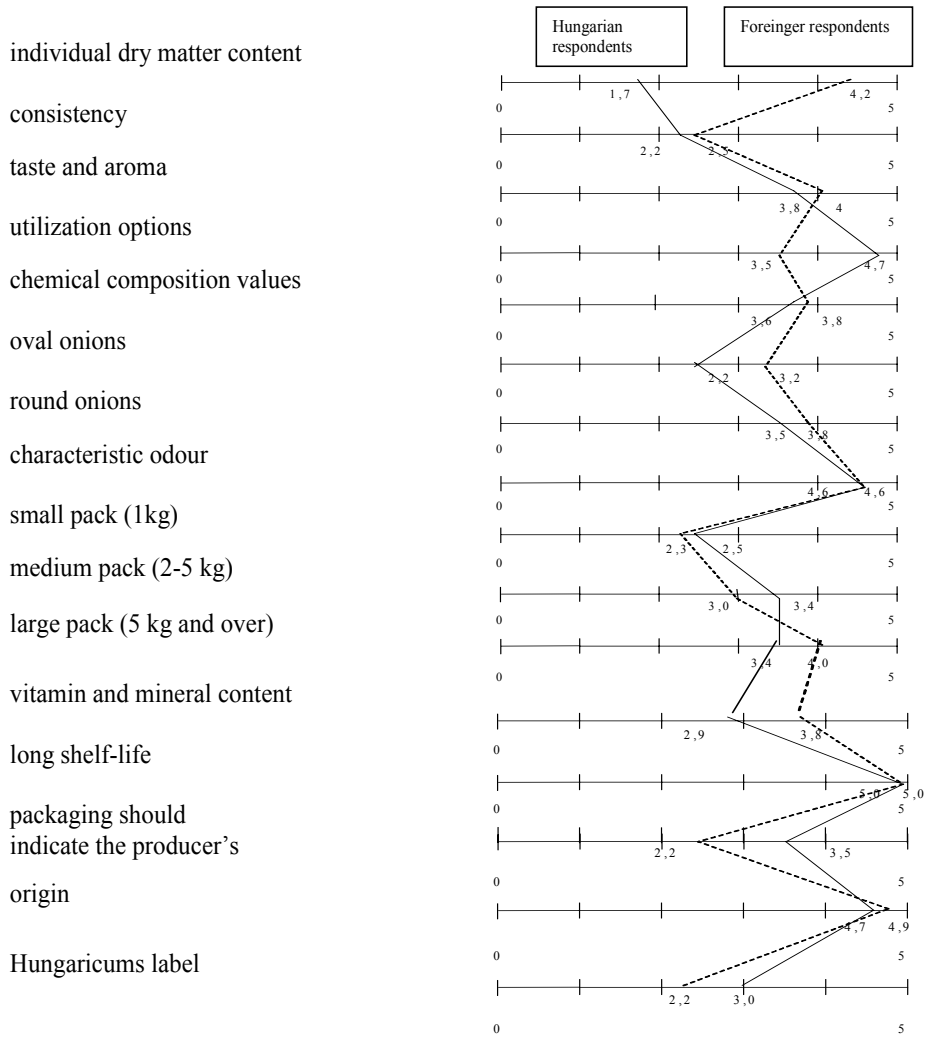


Fig. 3 Consumer's opinion regarding the quality of the onions from Makó in Hungary