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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FOR LOCAL CHEESE PRODUCED IN THE BANAT REGION

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Abstract: *Focusing on locally produced cheese from the Banat region, this study identifies the attributes that are most predictive of customer satisfaction. Drawing on consumer surveys, we consider sensory quality (taste, smell, aroma, and so on) and perceived freshness as the most important variables. Evidence points to sensory excellence as central to satisfaction*

• Introduction

Local and regional cheeses compete largely on sensory performance and freshness cues, which are consistently linked to consumer satisfaction and repeat purchase. This study focuses on Banat cow's cheese (telemea) and asks which product attributes—taste, smell, appearance, texture, colour, moisture/freshness, and basic nutritional value—best align with satisfied consumers. We profile preferred flavour balance (saltiness, slight acidity), aroma type and intensity, visual regularity, texture, and moisture, and relate these preferences to overall satisfaction. The contribution is a compact, practice-oriented account of the sensory drivers of satisfaction for a specific local cheese, suitable for guiding quality control, labelling, and product positioning.



Figure 1: Telemea cheese

• Material and method

We ran a short cross-sectional survey in early November 2025 with adult consumers of Banat cow's cheese (telemea). The questionnaire captured: overall satisfaction (1–5); importance (1–5) of taste, smell, appearance, consistency, colour, moisture, and nutritional value; and specific sensory preferences—saltiness and acidity (1–5), preferred aroma (dairy-like vs. fermented) and intensity (1–5), visual aspect (uniform vs. irregular) and tolerance for holes, texture (soft/creamy; slightly firm/tender; hard/crumbly) and cutting/chew firmness (1–5), preferred colour and colour uniformity (1–5), moisture level and aversion to added water (1–5). We also recorded valued nutrients (protein, vitamins, fats, carbohydrates, calcium) and whether telemea is a staple.

• Results and discussions

All respondents reported consuming cow's cheese (telemea), with most expressing high satisfaction (ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale). Sensory attributes—taste, smell, appearance, consistency, color, and freshness (moisture)—were rated as very important by the majority. Taste preferences tend toward moderate saltiness and mild acidity, with a clean, dairy-like smell (similar to milk or cream) being preferred over strong or fermented aromas. Consumers favored an even, uniform aspect and white to light yellow color, associating these traits with freshness and quality. In terms of texture, most preferred the cheese to be slightly firm yet tender, easy to cut or chew, and with few or no holes. Desired moisture was low to moderate, and respondents disliked the addition of excess water. Nutritionally, proteins, vitamins, and fats were the most valued components, and many respondents viewed the product as a basic food in their diet.

• Conclusions

Customer satisfaction for locally produced Banat telemea is strongly anchored in sensory quality, with taste and freshness as the most decisive attributes. Consumers expect a cheese that is moderately salted, mildly aromatic, and uniform in appearance, combining firmness with tenderness. The findings suggest that maintaining consistent sensory standards—particularly flavor balance, texture, and visible freshness—should be central to product differentiation and branding of local cheese. Ensuring authenticity and natural composition further strengthens consumer confidence and supports positioning telemea as a traditional, everyday food. Future research could expand sampling and quantify how sensory and nutritional cues jointly shape overall satisfaction and willingness to pay for local varieties.