Introduction

Preferences for traditional food products accentuate attention to region’s individuality, history, culinary heritage and local values. Traditional products are perceived as novel foods when they are introduced into a new territory.

Aims:
1. Elucidation of the consumer segments based on the variety-seeking and food neophobia
2. Testing whether the segments are different in terms of higher levels of products’ sensory preference and overall liking
3. Analysing segments if they deliver different evaluation of sensory attributes and willingness-to-buy

Materials & methods

PLACE: Małopolska in Poland and East Flanders in Belgium

PRODUCTS: 2 truffles, 2 pralines, 2 cheeses, 2 hams, 2 dried hams, 2 meats, 2 juices, 2 breads:
- 8 traditional products from Małopolska tested with 177 respondents in East Flanders
- 8 traditional products from East Flanders evaluated with 210 Małopolska consumers

Research steps:

- Segmentation
  - Variety-seeking scale (VASEEK, Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1992)
  - Food Neophobia Scale (FNS, Pliner & Hobden, 1992)
- Sensory liking and sensory attributes
  - 5-point sensory preference scale
  - 9-point hedonic scale: overall liking for colour, smell and taste
  - 5-point just-about-right (JAR) scales for three sensory attributes (colour intensity, sourness-sweetness-saltiness, hardness-concentration)
  - 5-point willingness-to-buy (WTB) scale
- Socio-economic profiles of segments
  - gender, age, income, education, place

Analysis:

- Factor, cluster, discriminant analyses
- T-test, Pearson’s test

Results

1. Consumer segments in Małopolska and East Flanders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors names</th>
<th>Classification function coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VASK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Małopolska</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety-seeking</td>
<td>0,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>-0,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>-0,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconformity</td>
<td>0,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimenting</td>
<td>0,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminant Score (DS)</td>
<td>0,222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Sensory liking and sensory attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East Flemish products evaluated in Małopolska</th>
<th>Malopolska products evaluated in East Flanders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truffles</td>
<td>Cheeses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pralines</td>
<td>Juices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried hams</td>
<td>Meats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Socio-economic profiles of segments

Income is only variable differing variety-seekers and neophobics in both regions. Variety-seekers in Małopolska: represented by lower income people, therefore price is important. However too low price of new traditional products might bring a negative effect.

Variety-seekers in Flanders: represented by highly educated people with a medium income who live at the countryside.

Conclusions

Food neophobics: 19% in Małopolska and 28% in Flanders

Flanders: variety-seekers give significantly higher liking scores than neophobics and higher WTB scores on 5 traditional cheeses, juice and meat product

Małopolska: variety-seekers give significantly higher WTB scores on 3 traditional ham and meat products

Smell is the best sensory descriptor of liking, and information about sensory attributes measured on JAR scales gives a clear direction to the product developers. JAR scores are related to people’s psychological characteristics and deliver valuable information for product developers.

Variety-seeking or food neophobia is related to income, education level and place of living and it differs between respondents in European regions.

References:

Understanding variety-seekers and neophobics tasting traditional products

Renata Januszewska1, Sara De Pelsmaeker1, Xavier Gellynck1, Koen Dewettinck2
1Ghent University, Department of Agricultural Economics, Coupare Links 653, Gent, Belgium
2Ghent University, Department of Food Safety and Food Quality, Coupare Links 653, Gent, Belgium
renata.januszewska@ugent.be, tel: +32 9 264 5930, fax: +32 9 264 6246, www.sensolab.be