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Consumers' preferences and attitudes toward traditional food products in Vojvodina

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ABSTRACT
The production and sale of traditional food products is important for regional and rural development as it contributes to income and employment growth. In addition, although only a small part of these products have export potential, most of them are important for the national or local market and the improvement of the tourist offer. Although the area of Vojvodina abounds in a variety of traditional food products, their potential has not been sufficiently exploited. Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyze the attitudes of consumers to determine their preferences and habits in the consumption of traditional food products, in order to draw conclusions about the activities through which producers of traditional food products can improve their offer. The research used a survey method that was conducted on a sample of 1375 respondents in 39 cities and villages in Vojvodina. Descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test were used as statistical methods. The obtained results gave an insight into the type and quantity of traditional food products that are consumed in Vojvodina, as well as the demographic profile of the respondents who consume traditional food products the most. Besides that, the basic motives and barriers of consumers in Vojvodina in the purchase of traditional food products were identified.

KEY WORDS: Consumer behaviour, consumer attitudes, consumer preferences, consumer profile, traditional food products, local products.

Introduction

According to Bertozzi (1998), a traditional food product (TFP) is a representation of a group, it belongs to a defined space and it is part of a culture that implies the cooperation of the individuals in that territory. Jordana (2000) states that in order to be traditional, a product must be linked to a territory and it must also be part of a set of traditions, which will necessarily ensure its continuity over time. Traditional food is food with a specific feature or features which distinguish it clearly from other similar products of the same category in terms of the use of "traditional ingredients" (raw materials or primary products) or "traditional composition" or "traditional type of production and/or processing method" (Costa, 2005). In 2006, the European Commission gave the following definition of traditional related to foods:"Traditional means proven usage in the community market for a time period showing transmission between generations; this time period should be the one generally ascribed as one human generation, at least 25 years." (European Commission, 2006). Subsequently, the definition of traditional food was developed through the work of the EuroFIR Network of Excellence. Their definition includes statements relating to traditional ingredients, traditional composition and traditional type of production and/or processing (Trichopoulo et al., 2007). From a consumer perspective Guerrero et al. (2009) defined a traditional food product as "a product frequently consumed or associated with specific celebrations and/or seasons, normally transmitted from one generation to another, made accurately in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage, with little or no processing/manipulation, distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated to a certain local area, region or country. Traditional foods have been affected by many factors, such as the availability of raw materials and therefore in countries without the access to the sea, the availability of fish and seafood is usually lower than in countries with a large coastal area (Davis, 2005).

Local food production, tradition and connection to a product's region of origin may represent strong elements of local identity and culture (Galli and Brunori, 2013). Where strong local identity and commitment to the region exists, the demand for local products is likely to be greater. The definitions of local, regional, and traditional products are often conflated, causing overlaps and confusion about their interpretation and differences (Uyttendaele et al., 2012). Although the concept of a traditional product is related to the notion of local and regional products, these terms are not equivalent (Pieniak et al., 2009). As Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2018) state, these three concepts have not been analyzed together in the literature, despite the fact that many products in the markets simultaneously meet the definitions of local, regional and traditional. It must be borne in mind when defining a traditional food product that the identification of a particular origin is a necessary, but not sufficient condition to classify a product as traditional; thus only some local products can be considered traditional. A traditional product is linked to both territory and tradition (Jordana, 2000). An important part of traditional food products is sales under various collective trademarks such as quality labels, including EU quality labels: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) (Bryla, 2015).

The production and sale of traditional food products enables many regions to have higher income and employment, and protects rural areas from depopulation. A small part of these products has export potential, and the largest part is important for the national or local market and tourist offer (Kovačić et al. 2015). Standardization and increase of traditional food production in the territory of Serbia have been identified as important strategic directions for the development of the agro-rural economy of Serbia. Understanding the consumer perception of traditional products and their labeling is of particular significance since only those foods that are accepted by end consumers can find a place on the market (Stojanović and Ognjanov, 2012). Within the Smart Specialization Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2027, the area of "Food for the Future" was identified as one of the priority areas for development. Within this area, a SWOT analysis was performed based on which traditional products were identified as one of the strengths, while the certification of traditional food products and their market valorization stand out as an opportunity. This strategy also points to the potential of connecting tourism with traditional gastronomy. However, Radović et al. (2017) point out that rich treasury of traditional agricultural and food products with a geographical indication is not sufficiently exploited for marketing purposes. The authors argue that traditional agricultural and food products, which are also protected by a geographical indication, should be used in promotion, placed through the catering offer, but also especially offered to tourists so that they can buy and take them as a souvenir. Also, they point out that adequate economic valorization of traditional products through rural tourism would provide a higher income to the rural population, and thus faster rural development.
However, without knowing the consumer behaviour, it is impossible to successfully plan the marketing activities of any organization, be it large companies or small individual producers. Marketing managers are constantly able to analyze what motivates potential consumers and why they show certain preferences in the process of purchasing products and services on the market (Milisavljević et al., 2005). Researching consumer behaviour, their motives and attitudes, and creating a marketing strategy and marketing program, based on information obtained from research, do not necessarily mean success in the market. However, they do greatly reduce the risk of error and increase the chance that a product or service will be accepted by consumers and thus provide producers with adequate market share and profit (Ćirić et al., 2015).

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate consumer attitudes towards traditional food products, so that based on their preferences and consumption habits, appropriate recommendations can be given to producers on how to improve marketing activities and the overall offer of traditional food products.

Material and methods

In the research of consumer preferences and attitudes, quantitative research was applied, so that statistical analysis could be performed and the obtained results could be generalized to a wider population. The method used is the survey method. The survey was anonymous. A list of specially formulated questions was prepared for the survey in accordance with the set goal of the research. The questions were closed and open-ended depending on the degree of accuracy of the information we wanted to get. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part asked questions that determined the attitudes of consumers and their preferences related to traditional food products. In the second part, the questions referred to the demographic characteristics of the sample examined. In creating the questionnaire, we relied on the research by: Almli et al.(2011), Bryla (2015), Pieniak et al. (2009) i Vanhonacker et al. (2010).

The research was conducted on the territory of Vojvodina in 39 cities and villages. When selecting the towns and villages it was taken in account that the sample should be geographically representative and that the selected towns and villages should be evenly distributed in the area of Bačka, Banat and Srem.The time interval during which the research was conducted was September-December 2019. In Bryla's study (2015), which was our reference, and which was conducted in Poland, the sample size was 1000 respondents. Therefore, in our study, we collected 1375 randomly selected respondents. The method of data collection was determined by sending a link to the Google questionnaire via e-mail and in person by interviewing randomly selected respondents who entered their answers into the Google questionnaire.

After the completion of the survey, the questionnaire was analysed. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and Chi-square test were used for the detailed analysis of data. The results of the research are expressed numerically and presented in tables.

Results and discussion

The results of the research are summarized and presented in a table.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the examined sample of consumers in Vojvodina
Tabela 1
Demografske karakteristike ispitivanog uzorka potrošača u Vojvodini

	Question	Answer	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	**Gender**	Male	591	42.98
		Female	784	57.02
2.	**Age**	Up to 24	351	25.53
		25-39	574	41.74
		40-60	383	27.85
		Over 61	67	4.88
3.	**Level of education**	Primary and secondary education	602	43.78
		Higher education	669	48.65
		Other (master degree, PhD)	104	7.57
4.	**Number of household members**	1-2	268	19.49
		3-4	817	59.42
		5 and more	290	21.09
5.	**Total average income of your household is:**	Up to 500 euros	337	24.51
		501 - 1000 euros	229	16.65
		1001 – 1500 euros	535	38.91
		More than 1501 euros	274	19.93

Based on the results shown in the table, we can see that there is approximately the same participation of men and women in the sample, with women being slightly more present. Also, there is an equal number of members of generation z and generation y, while the number of members of generation x is slightly higher, and there are significantly less baby boomers in the sample. When we look at the education level, we notice that in the sample there is approximately the same participation of respondents with primary, secondary and higher education whereas respondents with master or PhD degree are less present, which is a justified sample, given the lower presence of this category of respondents in the overall population structure. When it comes to the number of household members, we can see that one-member and two-member households and five-member and multi-member households are equally present in the sample while three-member and four-member households prevail. As for household income, there is an approximately even distribution of respondents in the sample, although there are slightly more respondents with household income between 1001 and 1500 euros. Based on the demographic structure of the examined sample, we can conclude that the sample is suitable for the analysis of attitudes and habits of consumers of traditional food products in Vojvodina.

Table 2
The type of traditional food products that are purchased and produced independently and the degree of ethnocentrism of the respondents
Tabela 2
Vrsta tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda koji se kupuju i samostalno proizvode i stepen etnocentričnosti ispitanika

Question	Answer	Number of respondents	Percentage
The type of traditional food products that respondents buy	Dairy products	900	65.45%
	Meat products	764	55.56%
	Honey	612	44.51%
	Bakery and confectionery products	527	38.33%
	Juices	381	27.71%
	Rakija (an alcoholic drink made from the distillation of fermented fruit)	341	24.80%
	Jam and jelly	305	22.18%
	Wine	286	20.80%
	Sauerkraut, *ajvar* (roasted red pepper sauce) and pickles	252	18.33%
	The respondent does not buy any traditional food product	87	6.33%
Production of traditional food products within the household and the extended family	Members of the respondent's extended family make traditional food products	551	40.07%
	Traditional food products are made in the respondent's own household	448	32.58%
	Traditional food products are not made within the respondent's household or by their extended family	376	27.34%
The most important traditional food products that are made within the household and by the extended family	Sauerkraut, *ajvar* and pickles	511	51.15%
	Jam and jelly	364	36.44%
	Rakija	239	23.92%
	Meat products	197	19.72%
The importance of the country of origin of traditional food products	The respondent buys both domestic and foreign traditional food products	616	44.80%
	The respondent buys exclusively domestic traditional food products	597	43.42%
	The respondent buys exclusively foreign traditional food products	75	5.45%
	The respondent does not buy traditional food products	87	6.33%

In order to determine which type of traditional food products the respondents buy, we asked them a question with multiple answer options and the option to write the answer that we did not offer (the respondents had the opportunity to complete one or more answers). The highest percentage of the respondents, 65.45% of them, answered that they buy dairy products, 55.56% of the respondents answered that they buy meat products, 44.51% of the respondents buy honey, 38.33% of the respondents buy bakery and confectionery products. This data is largely in line with the research by Popović et al. (2014) who state that the most commonly consumed traditional food products in Serbia are *gibanica* (pie-like dish) and *vanilice* (bite-sized vanilla cookies) (which, according to our classification, fall under bakery and confectionery products), fresh cheese and kajmak (a creamy dairy product) (under dairy products), *ajvar* and *prebranac* (baked beans). Then follows, in a slightly smaller percentage, according to our research, the purchase of juices, *rakija*, jam, jelly, etc. then sauerkraut, ajvar and pickles. Since we provided consumers with the option to list some of the products that we did not offer among the answer options, the product that stood out in a significant percentage is wine. Only 6.33% of the respondents answered that they do not buy traditional food products. The obtained results are very important information for producers of traditional food products, both existing and those who are considering entering this business, as they indicate the fact that consumers in Vojvodina have a positive attitude towards buying traditional food products, and therefore there is a significant potential market to be developed. The obtained result is in accordance with the research by Almli et al. (2011) conducted in six European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain). More specifically, based on the examined characteristics of traditional food products, it was determined that there is the positive general image of traditional food products across Europe.

The answers to the question whether they make some traditional food products either themselves within their own household or are made by their extended family speak in favour of the fact that in Vojvodina there is a great tradition of making certain traditional food products within their own households and within their extended family's household. This data is important because it indicates that regardless of the positive attitude of consumers towards the purchase of traditional food products, the potential market is diminished by the fact that some of the products are home-made. Respondents who stated that they produce traditional food products within their own households or extended family's household were offered the option to write down which products they produce themselves. The obtained results are summarized as follows: 51.15% *ajvar*, sauerkraut, pickles, 36.44% jam and jelly, 23.92% *rakija*, 19.72% meat products, while other products are present in smaller percentages. If we compare these results with the results related to which traditional food products consumers buy, we conclude that it is *ajvar*, sauerkraut, pickles, jam and jelly that consumers mostly make themselves and that are bought the least compared to other traditional food products. On the other hand, for example, milk and dairy products, honey, bakery and confectionery products, and even meat products (because they are independently produced in a smaller percentage) are products that have significant potential for growth in consumption, i.e. the purchase on the Vojvodina market.

In order to determine the extent to which the respondents are ethnocentric, we asked them if they do buy traditional food products, whether the country of origin of traditional food products is important to them. Based on the obtained results, we notice that a significant percentage of consumers, 43.4% of them, are ethnocentric, i.e. they prefer exclusively products of domestic origin and they are the most important target group domestic producers of traditional food products should focus on. This result is in agreement with the research by Vanhonacker et al. (2010) who point out that consumers of traditional food products believe that it is best to purchase foods from one's own region or country. As well as that, citizens should not buy foreign products. On the other hand, 44.8% of the respondents prefer both domestic and foreign products, so they represent a target group that is a potential market for both domestic and foreign producers. Given the significant percentage of this group of consumers, it must not be neglected by domestic producers of traditional food products. However, as this group of consumers represents a market with greater competition, in order to gain the loyalty of this group of consumers, domestic producers of traditional food products need to make more efforts to meet the needs and desires of this group of consumers and be constantly acquainted with the offer of foreign producers of traditional food products.

Table 3
The share of traditional food products in the total food consumption of the respondents
Tabela 3
Učešće tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda u ukupnoj potrošnji hrane ispitanika

Question	Answer	Number of respondents	Percentage
The share of traditional food products in the total food consumption of the respondents	<10%	225	16.36%
	11-30%	469	34.11%
	31-50%	434	31.56%
	>51%	247	17.96%

In order to determine the extent to which traditional food products are used in the diet of the citizens of Vojvodina, we asked the question what the percentage share of traditional food products is in relation to conventional products in the diet of their household. By analyzing the obtained answers, we can see that in as many as 17.96% of the respondents, traditional food products are present with more than 51% share in the household diet. Also, the fact that in a total of 49.52% of the respondents, traditional food products are present with 31% and up in the diet of their households is important for traditional food producers, which also supports the thesis that consumers in Vojvodina have a positive attitude towards traditional food products and consume them to a significant extent.

In order to determine the demographic profile of the respondents who have the greatest propensity to consume traditional food products, we performed a Chi-square test to determine whether there are differences in the amount of consumption of traditional food products depending on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4
Differences in the share of traditional food in total food consumption depending on gender, age and education
Tabela 4
Razlike u učešću tradicionalne hrane u ukupnoj potrošnji hrane u zavisnosti od pola, godina i obrazovanja

		Gender		Age				Education		
		Male	Female	<24	25-39	40-60	>61	Primary and sec.	Higher	Master and PhD
<10%	**Number**	120	105	77	69	62	17	122	89	14
	%	20.30	13.39	21.94	12.02	16.19	25.37	20.27	13.30	13.46
11-30%	**Number**	202	267	113	214	128	14	184	249	36
	%	34.18	34.05	32.19	37.28	33.42	20.89	30.56	37.22	34.61
31 -50%	**Number**	180	254	107	188	120	19	186	210	38
	%	30.46	32.39	30.48	32.75	31.33	28.35	30.90	31.39	36.54
>51%	**Number**	89	158	54	103	73	17	110	121	16
	%	15.06	20.15	15.39	17.95	19.06	25.37	18.27	18.09	15.38
Total	**Number**	591	784	351	574	383	67	602	669	104
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Pearson Chi-Square	Chi-square =15.10 c.v= 7.82 df=3		Chi-square =26.37 c.v= 16.92 df=9				Chi-square =15.42 c.v= 12.59 df=6		

By usign Chi-square test for the level of statistical significance p=0.05, we found that there is a statistically significant difference between men and women in relation to the share of traditional food products in total food consumption. In the total sample of women, it is the least those women who use the traditional food products less than 10% in their total consumption of these products. In the total sample of men, it is the least those men who use the traditional food products more than 51% in their total consumption of these products. This is in line with the view of Ognjanov and Stojanović (2012) who argue that in the Western Balkans region, women are more often responsible for making decisions about the purchase of food and the choice of food products to be consumed by other household members. It is also in line with Platania and Privitera (2006) who state that consumers of traditional food products are women. However, it differs from the research by Vanhonacker et al. (2010) conducted in six European countries (Norway, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy and Poland) according to which traditional food consumption is not significantly related to gender and from the research conducted in Poland by Bryła (2015) according to which men and women behave similarly on the Polish market for origin food. Due to the differences regarding the demographic profile of consumers in different countries, it is necessary to make a demographic profile for each country.

Table 5 The difference in the share of traditional food in the total food consumption depending on the household income and the number of household members
Tabela 5
Razlika u učešću tradicionalne hrane u ukupnoj potrošnji hrane u zavisnosti od prihoda domaćinstva i broja članova domaćinstva

		Household income				**Number of household members**		
		<500	**501-1000**	**1001-1500**	**>1501**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5 and more**
<10%	**Number**	75	32	79	39	57	123	45
	%	22.25	13.97	14.77	14.23	21.27	15.05	15.52
11-30%	**Number**	104	93	182	90	87	289	93
	%	30.86	40.61	34.02	32.85	32.46	35.37	32.07
31 -50%	**Number**	86	69	192	87	73	268	93
	%	25.52	30.13	35.89	31.75	27.24	32.80	32.07
>51%	**Number**	72	35	82	58	51	137	59
	%	21.36	15.29	15.32	21.17	19.03	16.77	20.34
Total	**Number**	337	229	535	274	268	817	290
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Pearson Chi-Square	Chi-square =27.50 c.v= 16.92 df=9				Chi-square =9.61 c.v= 12.59 df=6		

There is also a statistically significant difference in the consumption of traditional food products in relation to age. The obtained results indicate the fact that with growth in age, the percentage of consumers who consume traditional food products increases accordingly above 51%. Also, if we add up the consumption of traditional food products in the amount of 30 to 50% and the consumption above 51%, we also see that there is an increase from the youngest to the oldest category of respondents. This data can be explained by the fact that a larger percentage of older respondents make traditional food products themselves, in addition to buying them, hence their consumption of traditional food products is higher. This result is consistent with the research by Vanhonacker et al. (2010) according to which consumers of traditional food products across Europe are typically middle-aged to elderly. While Bryła (2015) found that a higher consumption was observed in the 25–34 and 55–65 age groups.

Education also proved to be a demographic factor that reflects on the consumption of traditional food products, since the Chi-square test confirmed a significant statistical difference between respondents of different educational structure. More specifically, the results show that with the increase in the level of education, the percentage of the share of traditional food products in the total consumption also increases. It is only noticeable that among people with master degree and PhD the percentage of share of traditional food products in total consumption above 51% is lower than among people with primary and secondary school and those with higher education (graduates). However, people with the highest education consume traditional food products the most if we collectively observe the respondents who consume traditional food products in a percentage between 30 and 50%

and those who consume them over 51%. This result is in contrast to the research to which Vanhonacker et al. (2010) refer in their work and according to which consumers of traditional food products are people with a lower educational level. The result we obtained can be explained by the fact that various forms of education and promotion of traditional food products were done in Vojvodina, which emphasized the quality and health effect of some of these products, and therefore respondents with higher education who care more about health attributes consume more traditional food products. It can also be explained by the fact that the higher education can bring higher income, giving the respondent an opportunity to choose what kind of food he/she will eat.6

There is a statistically significant difference in the consumption of traditional food products in the total food consumption between the respondents depending on the household income. More specifically, the results revealed a very interesting fact that respondents with the lowest household income and respondents with the highest household income consume traditional food products the most with the percentage above 51%. The reason for this result may be in the fact that consumers with the lowest incomes make these products themselves in their own household, and therefore consume them more. Given the higher price of these products, with their own incomes which are below the average in Serbia, they would not be able to buy them in such a percentage in relation to the total food consumption. On the other hand, respondents with the highest incomes have the financial possibilities to buy traditional food products to a greater extent, hence it seems logical that their share in the total food consumption is higher. This is in accordance with Vanhonacker et al. (2010) who state that consumers of traditional food products spend a high percentage of their income on food. It is also interesting to note that respondents with the lowest incomes consume more traditional food products compared to the other groups of respondents, percentage less than 10%, which is also explained by their lower ability to pay. Therefore, those respondents with lower incomes who are not able to make traditional food products themselves consume them less. Bryła (2015) found that consumers with lower incomes tend to buy origin food less often, but this relationship was not statistically significant. From the results of our research, it can be stated that for the purchase of traditional food products, it is necessary that the respondents have higher incomes, because the amount of household income is reflected in the purchase of traditional food products.

Based on the Chi-square test, we found that there is no statistically significant difference in the consumption of traditional food products in relation to the number of household members. This is contrary to the view of Vanhonacker et al. (2010) according to which consumers of traditional food products live in larger households. However, it is consistent with Bryła (2015) who found that there is no statistically significant relationship between household size and origin food consumption. The obtained result can be interpreted by the fact that the consumption of traditional food products in Vojvodina is extremely high and very present in the food culture of consumers in Vojvodina. Consumers also consume these products for themselves, not only for the fact that they have children in their own household.

In order to give the producers of traditional food products appropriate recommendations for improving the marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion), it was necessary to determine the motives of consumers to consume these products, as well as barriers to buying them, which we presented in Table 6.

In defining the motives for buying traditional food products, the respondents could circle several answer options. The results we obtained indicate that the basic motive for buying traditional food products is concern about health, because as many as 61.38% of the respondents state that they believe that traditional food products are healthier than the conventional ones. This is in accordance with Popović et al. (2011) who state that among other traditional foods, Serbian cheese and kajmak are consumed on a daily basis, with cow's milk cheese and kajmak generally perceived as healthy food regarding their content of proteins, minerals and vitamins.

Table 6
Motives and barriers to buying traditional food products
Tabela 6
Motivi i barijere za kupovinu tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda

Question	Answer	Number of respondents	Percentage
Motives for buying traditional food products	They are healthier than the conventional ones	844	61.38
	They taste better than conventional products	602	43.78
	They are of top quality	377	27.42
	They are locally produced in the home country	362	26.33
	The producer is known by the respondent	271	19.71
	They look better than the conventional ones	67	4.87
	They have a better image than conventional products	39	2.84
	They have better packaging than the conventional ones	21	1.53
	The respondent does not buy traditional food products	87	6.33
Barriers to buying traditional food products	Poor market availability	605	44.00
	High price	450	32.73
	Concern about health (safety)	335	24.36
	Conventional products are equally good	309	22.47

This motive for healthy food and the perception of traditional dairy products as being healthy, can also give an explanation for the result we obtained that most of the traditional food products are dairy products. Trichopoulou et al. (2007) also state that traditional food products have certain healthy characteristics. However, Pieniak et al. (2009) came to results according to which there is a negative association between health as a motive for food choice and traditional food consumption. They explain this by the perception that traditional foods are often full fat and energy-dense products, or products that underwent only minimal conservation processing or packaging and hence are perhaps perceived as entailing higher microbial risk. But it is important to note that Pieniak et al. (2009) obtained a result by which traditional food products are associated with natural content. This could also be an answer to our result according to which respondents perceive traditional food products as healthy, because they have a natural content compared to conventional food products. Then, the second motive is the better taste of traditional food products, which is stated by 43.78% of respondents. This result is consistent with the research by Bryla (2015) who found that the most important determinants of origin food selection include: traditional recipe, taste, and product uniqueness. In addition to the above two most important motives, 27.42% of respondents believe that traditional food products guarantee top quality, and therefore buy them, and 26.33% of them state that they buy traditional food products because they know that they are locally made, and in this way, they support the economy of their country and believe more in their quality. High quality is a characteristic that proved to be significant in the perception of traditional food products in six European countries, Almli et al. (2011). However, given the specifics of consumers in each country, it is important to point out the differences from country to country. Thus, Almli et al. (2011) found that Spaniards and the Italians characterize traditional food products as having a good and special taste, a high and consistent quality, a good appearance, a high nutritional value and as being healthy which is closest to the results of consumer research in Vojvodina. The Belgians perceive TFP as having a good taste, a high quality and a high availability. The French find TFP to be of high quality and rather expensive. The Poles characterize TFP as having a good and special taste, a high yet not highly consistent quality, a high environmental friendliness, a good support for the local economy, a high preparation time and rather high prices. The Norwegians characterize TFP as having a good taste, a high quality, a relatively low healthiness, a high safety and a long preparation time.

To understand consumer behaviour and their decision to buy traditional food products, besides motives it is important to understand the barriers due to which consumers do not buy at all or do not buy more types and a larger amount of traditional food products. The largest percentage of respondents, 44%, answered that the biggest barrier to buying traditional food products is that they cannot find more types of products produced in the traditional way on the market. In the answers that the respondents wrote themselves, it can also be noticed that this type of product is not easily available to customers, they are difficult to find in stores, they are not always on offer and therefore their purchase is difficult. This result is in line with the research by Stojanović and Ognjanov (2012) who state that traditional food is most often produced in households and on farms, whose main characteristics are small production capacities and problems during the distribution and placement of goods. These problems are mostly related to the insufficient quantities of products that they are able to deliver to the market, as well as to the lack of quality systems and non-compliance with health standards. This result is in line with the research in the world by Pieniak et al. (2009), who state that the convenience of buying is a barrier to the consumption of traditional food products.

In addition to the fact that they are harder to find on the market compared to conventional products, another reason that limits the higher consumption of these products is the price. More specifically, 32.73% of the respondents do not buy these products to a greater extent due to the high price. In the research by Almli et al. (2011), the French and Poles state the price as being a determinant of traditional food products. That is in line with the research by Stojanović and Ognjanov (2012) who point out that it is due to the higher price that consumers need to be educated about the advantages of traditional food with geographical indication. They argue that consumers need to be clearly presented with the added value they receive in order for them to accept a slightly higher price for this type of food. It is interesting to note that Pieniak et al. (2009) obtained the result that the importance of price when purchasing food failed to be significantly related to traditional food consumption both for the pooled sample as well as within each country except in Spain. These different results by country are another confirmation of the necessity of consumer research for each individual country. Furthermore, 24.36% of respondents are not sure that the product is safe in terms of health. This barrier can be reduced by protecting the geographical origin of traditional food products, given that the legal regulations governing the matter of geographical indication of the origin of agri-food products impose strict control over compliance with quality standards. Law on Indications of Geographical Origin ("Offiicial Gazette of RS" No. 18/2010 and 44/2018 - state law). In addition to these barriers, 22.47% of the respondents believe that some conventional products are just as good as traditional food products so they consume less traditional food products. Therefore, the challenge for producers of traditional food products is to point out the differences in quality compared to conventional food products through the promotion and education of consumers who are not sufficiently familiar with the characteristics of traditional food products.

Conclusion

Consumers in Vojvodina have an extremely positive attitude towards buying traditional food products. Only 6.33% of the respondents do not buy traditional food products. In as many as 49.52% of the respondents traditional food products are present more than 31% in total food consumption. Traditional food products that the respondents make in their own households the most are *ajvar*, sauerkraut, pickles, after that jam, then *rakija* and meat products. Traditional food products bought by the largest percentage of the respondents are: dairy products, then, meat products, honey and bakery and confectionery products. Therefore, it is recommended for producers of traditional food products to focus on increasing the production of dairy products, honey, bakery and confectionery products, and even meat products because there is a significant market potential for consumption growth.

The demographic profile of the respondents who consume traditional food products the most in Vojvodina are women, the elderly, those with higher education and those with higher household incomes. This data is important for producers of traditional food products when creating a marketing mix.

A significant percentage of respondents in Vojvodina are ethnocentric and buy exclusively products of domestic origin, which is very important for the development of the local economy. However, as the largest percentage of respondents do not differentiate between domestic and foreign traditional food products, producers of domestic traditional food products are facing the challenge of growing foreign competition. Knowing the motives of consumers and barriers to the purchase of traditional food products is important in order to improve the offer of traditional food products.

If producers of traditional food products wish to motivate consumers to buy traditional food products, they should present information in advertising appeals that would support the fact that traditional food products are healthier than the conventional ones which is in accordance with Popović et al. (2011) and Trichopoulou et al. (2007) as well as that they are of high quality, which is in accordance with Almli et al. (2011). In addition, it is necessary to enable consumers to taste the product in order to have the opportunity to see for themselves its taste. Finally, domestic producers of traditional food products should also emphasize in their advertising appeals that these are domestic products produced in our country from domestic raw materials, and in that way motivate the ethnocentric consumers to buy.

In addition, in order to increase the purchase of traditional food products, it is necessary in the first place to ensure that these products are more available to customers. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the production of traditional food products, by encouraging the inclusion of a larger number of individual producers in this business, work on mutual cooperation between producers and also gradually introduce new distribution channels. A proposal for the future research is to analyze the possibilities for selling these products online. Where possible given production costs, it is necessary to diminish the price of products and align it with consumer willingness to pay, or focus on those segments of consumers that are able to pay a higher price for these products. Finally, it is necessary to document the health safety of products, which can be achieved through cooperation with relevant institutions.

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Preferencije i stavovi potrošača o tradicionalnim prehrambenim proizvodima u Vojvodini

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SAŽETAK
Proizvodnja i prodaja tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda je važna za regionalni i ruralni razvoj jer doprinosi rastu dohotka i zaposlenosti. Osim toga iako samo manji deo ovih proizvoda ima izvozni potencijal, najveći deo njih je važan za nacionalno odnosno lokalno tržište i unapređenje turističke ponude. Iako područje Vojvodine obiluje raznovrsnim tradicionalnim prehrambenim proizvodima, njihov potencijal nije iskorišćen u dovoljnoj meri. Stoga je cilj ovog istraživanja da se analizom stavova potrošača utvrde njihove preferencije i navike u potrošnji tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda, kako bi se došlo do zaključaka o aktivnostima putem kojih proizvođači tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda mogu unaprediti svoju ponudu. U istraživanju je primenjena metoda ankete koja je sprovedena na uzorku od 1375 ispitanika u 39 gradova i sela u Vojvodini. Od statističkih metoda korišćena je deskriptivna statistika i Chi kvadrat test. Dobijeni rezultati su dali uvid u vrstu i količinu tradicionalnih prehramebnih proizvoda koji se konzumiraju u Vojvodini, kao i demografski profil ispitanika koji najviše konzumira tradicionalne prehrambene proizvode. Osim toga, identifikovani su osnovni motivi i barijere potrošača u Vojvodini u kupovini tradicionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda.

KLJUČNE REČI: ponašanje potrošača, stavovi potrošača, preferencije potrošača, profil potrošača, tradicionalni prehrambeni proizvodi, lokalni proizvodi

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