Generation Z's Knowledge and Purchasing Behavior Toward Products with Geographical Identification

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Abstract

This paper presents research concerning the Greek Generation Z cohort's (N=544) behavior towards certified products with geographical identification with emphasis on local traditional food products, via an online questionnaire applying a nonprobability sampling frame. Questions referred to knowledge of certified and local products and purchasing behavior. Descriptive analysis and market segmentation based on reasons for purchase were applied. Segmentation is built on the reasons for purchasing products with geographical identification and specifically, local traditional products. Segmentation with cluster analysis revealed two distinct groups of consumers. Marketing directions are provided in order to raise the consumption of local traditional food products.

Keywords

Local traditional food products, Generation Z, Marketing, Greece

1. Introduction

Cayot [1] asserts that the term "traditional products" (TP) denotes products made from certain raw materials and/or in accordance with a long-established recipe and/or process. Trichopoulou et al. [2] point out that TP has unique characteristics that distinguish them from others that are similar and/or fall into the same category of using the traditional ingredient, traditional composition, and method of production and/or processing. The same researchers state that these products are "passed down from generation to generation", they are ready-made in a particular way that is in line with the gastronomic heritage of the region and are characterized by their particular organoleptic properties [2]. There is no single definition of traditional products, while plenty may be found in academic literature [3]. The European Union and EC Regulation 509/2006 for traditional products states: "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" [4]. Local traditional products (LTP) are considered crucial components of each region and may be utilized as symbols of it [5] since they are produced only in particular areas of the European Union, are protected by law [6] and so are "attached" to these areas or regions. Consumer characteristics and even more specifically the generational cohort that a consumer belongs in, impact his/her food choices [7,8]. Therefore, this research is focused on the youngest adult generational cohort, i.e., Generation Z, and explores knowledge and behavior towards local traditional food products (LTFP) and groups participants according to their behavior (specifical reasons for purchase LTFP).

2. Materials and Methods

The targeted population was adult members of the Generation Z cohort being 18-25 years old [9] the year that the research was implemented. Specifically, the research took place during the months of

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February and March 2021. The data was collected exclusively online, and, in this manner, 544 valid questionnaires were gathered. The online questionnaire which was utilized for this survey was adopted from Mamalis et al. [10]. Questions were related to knowledge of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI) products, and Local products (LP). They were also asked if they can recognize (in general) the different certified product warranties, and how often they check food labels for geographical indication certifications before purchasing. Additionally, the frequency of consuming locally certified products was explored, as well as the point of purchase. Lastly, the reasons for choosing local products over non-local are explored (employing a 5-point attitudinal Likert Scale) and based on these reasons, segmentation analysis is realized through K-Means Cluster Analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic Profile of the Subjects

Thirty-three-point one percent (33.1%) were men while 66.9% were women. No member of the Gen Zers was married or had a child. Concerning education, 68.8% had compulsory education (Lyceum), 26.1% had a university degree, and 5.1% had a post-graduate degree. As to profession, 66.9% were university students, 19.9% were private employees, 3.7% were businessmen, and 9.6% were unemployed. The majority of the sample (80.5%) had a personal net monthly income of up to 500,00€, and the rest 19.5% over 500.00€ per month.

3.2. Knowledge of Certified Food Products

Participants were asked if they knew what PDO and PGI products were, and if they could recognize certification product warranties (Table 1). As Table 1 presents, Gen Zers have knowledge mainly of what a local product is, while they lack knowledge of what PDO, PGI, and overall, they also lack the ability to recognize the different certified product warranties.

As to how often participants checked the food geographical indication certifications, 27.9% stated always or often, 29.8% stated occasionally, and 42.3% stated rarely or never.

Table 1
Knowledge and recognition of food product warranties (%)

Knowledge and recognition of food product warranties	No	Not sure	Yes
Knowledge of what a PDO product is	24.3	42.6	33.1
Knowledge of what a PGI product is	47.8	44.9	7.4
Knowledge of what a LP product is	3.2	12.2	84.6
Recognition of the certified product warranties	32.7	43.0	24.3

3.3. Consumption and Purchasing Behavior of LTFP

Fifty-two-point four percent (52.4%) purchase LTFP at least once per week, 29.0% purchase LTFP rarely (several times per year), and 18.6% purchase LTFP occasionally (2-4 times per month).

The most purchased LTFP was honey (64.7%), feta cheese (61.0%), and olive oil (60.3%). As to the point of purchase of locally certified products, 17.6% answered from a shop that sells local food products, 63.6% from the supermarket, and 18.8% directly from the producers. The main reasons for purchasing LTFP are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Reasons for purchasing LTFP

LTFP are	1	2	3	4	5	MS	Median
1. Healthy	4.8	0.4	27.8	41.7	25.4	3.83	4.00
2. Safe	4.8	6.4	28.3	41.2	19.3	3.64	4.00
3. Nutritional	1.5	1.8	19.1	48.5	29.0	4.02	4.00
4. Delicious	1.5	9.2	17.6	37.9	33.8	3.93	4.00
5. Authentic products	1.5	5.1	20.6	30.1	42.6	4.07	4.00
6. Promoting their area of origin	3.3	1.8	13.6	32.4	48.9	4.22	4.00
7. Supporting local producers	1.5	0.0	17.6	19.5	61.4	4.39	5.00

3.4. Segmentation

K-Means Cluster Analysis was implemented for segmentation of Generation Z members based on reasons of purchase. K-Means Cluster Analysis was implemented to all seven items since factor analysis offered with one dimension (reliability of scale α= 0.925). K-Means Cluster Analysis delivered two clusters, whereas ANOVA tests revealed that the two clusters differ in all items. Table 3 provides with the two clusters, their final cluster centers (FCC), and ANOVA results.

Table 3
Groups of Generation Z consumers based on purchasing of LTFP

LTFP are	1 N=444	2 N=100	F	Sig.
1. Healthy	4.17	2.56	372.802	.000
2. Safe	3.98	2.32	353.543	.000
3. Nutritional	4.27	2.90	376.577	.000
4. Delicious	4.26	2.50	458.548	.000
5. Authentic products	4.40	2.64	499.378	.000
6. Promoting their area of origin	4.52	2.86	420.438	.000
7. Supporting local producers	4.64	3.32	276.561	.000

Cluster 1: The "LTFP buyers." This group incorporates 444 consumers, which have positive attitudes towards all reasons for purchasing and consuming local traditional food (FCC>3.95). The main reason for purchasing LTFP is to support local producers and simultaneously promote the area of origin.

Cluster 2: The "Indifferent consumers". This group has 100 participants with 2.00<FCC<3.30 in all cases. They belong in the indifferent category since only two items have FCC<2.51, while no item has FCC>3.51. Two reasons could justify their behavior. First that they "just purchase them" because they are sold where they live, without paying attention for other reasons, and so could be sold at lower prices than similar products due to low distribution costs, or there are other variables that are not incorporated in these study that affect them.

4. Conclusions

The present study had its aim to delve into the Generation Z cohort's knowledge of geographical indications as well as their behavior towards LTFP. More than 65% and 90% do not know for sure what a PDO and a PGI product are respectively, while they do have knowledge of what an LP is. Additionally, more than 70% do not recognize geographical identification labels. This indicates the need for educating these young adults on the national and European geographical identification labels. Moreover, more than 40% stated that they rarely or never check the food geographical indication certifications, indicating that it is crucial to educate this segment on the importance of geographical indication certifications. The primary reasons for purchasing local LTP are to support the local producers and to promote their region of origin, while segmentation analysis promoted two consumer segments, the "LTFP buyers", and the "indifferent consumers". The segments of this study are similar to the segments that Mamalis et al. [10] found, who segmented consumers (N=400) aged 18-55 based on motives of purchasing LTFP and found two segments the "Local traditional buyers." and the "Indifferent occasional purchasers".

From a marketing perspective, highlighting the place of origin to better promote local products and educating consumers on the importance of geographical identification labels is crucial.

5. Research Limitations and Future Research

The central restriction of the survey is the sample, place, and size of research, i.e., 544 Greek Generation Z members. Additionally, it employed a nonprobability sampling method via the internet, which required internet access at the time of the research. Lastly, other elements for reasons of purchase could be incorporated, such as access to other products and price as a motive for purchase. These limitations can be drivers of further research.

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