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CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES ON USEFULNESS AND CONSUMPTION OF ENRICHED PRODUCTS

PREFERENCIJE POTROŠAČA O KORISNOSTI I KONZUMACIJI OBOGAĆENIH PROIZVODA

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to assess the preferences of consumers on usefulness and consumption of enriched and/or functional food products with a focus on table eggs. The survey of consumers' preferences on usefulness and consumption of enriched as well as functional products was conducted on a sample of 132 respondents. Data were collected using a questionnaire survey consisting of 15 questions. The first 7 questions related to socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education, marital status, occupation, income, etc.). The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 8 questions related to obtaining information on the will to purchase the aforementioned products, the health benefits of functional ingredients in enriched products, validity or scientific confirmation of declarations and the like. More women (60.6%) than men (39.4%) participated in the survey. Overall, the survey was completed by mostly young people, aged 19-29 (53%), highly educated (68.94%) with earnings of over 5001 kn (60.6%). According to respondents' opinion on the usefulness and correctness of enriched or functional products as well as the willingness to consume omega-3 eggs, most of them did not really have any opinion on these products, which is confirmed with the fact that highest frequency of answers to the asked questions was 4. Considering that the majority of respondents were of a younger age and according to the fact that they did not have defined opinion on enriched products, it is necessary to educate on the importance of these products in the diet.

Keywords: preferences, survey, enriched products, functional foods, eggs

INTRODUCTION

While shopping, consumers go through the decision making process. Decision on buying is influenced by a number of factors that may be stimulating or limiting. Those factors can be divided into: socio - cultural, demographic, psychological and situational (Kotler, 2001). Consumer attitudes or preferences can be used to understand consumer behaviour when buying a product, but can also be used to forecast consumer behaviour in the future (Solomon et al. 2006, Assael, 1992).

The concept of functional food began to be shaped in Japan during the 1980s (Weststrate et al., 2002), and since then, the functional food market in the world has grown considerably (Bigliardi and Galati, 2003). Towards the end of the 1990s, awareness on the impact of nutrition on health became even greater and demand for enriched food products and/or functional food was constantly increasing (Urala and Lähteenmäki 2007; Ozen et al., 2012; Kralik G. and Kralik Z., 2017). There are more definitions of functional food. According to Serafin

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et al. (2012), functional food is a synergy between health and nutrition, while Diplock et al. (1999) believe that food is functional if it provides consumers with the improvement of one or more targeted functions in the body. According to Spence (2006) there are four different types of functional food products: a) Enhanced products, in which the existing nutrients content is increased, b) Altered food, products to which nutrients are added which are not normally present in them, c) Enhanced commodities, in which existing nutrients are replaced with other nutrients without affecting product quality, d) Fortified products, that have been enriched during vegetation with some nutrient that alter the nutritional composition. In 2015th, Transparency Market Research (TMR) has released market research results for Global Nutraceuticals, and report that the value of Global Nutraceuticals products (functional foods, functional beverages, dietary supplements and personal care) will grow from US\$ 182.60 billion in 2015 to US\$ 278.96 billion to 2021. The functional food segment already dominates this market. The report stated that the consumption of these products will continue to grow at an annual rate of 7.1% foreseen for the period from 2015 to 2021. Accordingly, enriched and/or functional products have an important place in the food products market and there is a need for continuous education of producers and consumers about their importance. Placing a new product on the market without information about the attitudes, motivations, and preferences of consumers of enriched and/or functional foods can lead to a major loss in business (Wilcock et al., 2004). Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate consumers' preferences towards the usefulness and consumption of enriched and/or functional food. Additional emphasis was put on consumers' preferences towards purchasing and consumption of omega - 3 eggs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey was conducted in major cities (Osijek, Đakovo, Našice, Donji Miholjac, Valpovo) in the Osijek - Baranja County area during the year 2016. In total, 132 respondents were included in the survey. The sample included working population (older than 18 years) who are supposed to make or will make decisions on purchasing food products for their households. The survey was conducted as an

interview (face to face) with each respondent. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the sociodemographic profile of respondents. These were the multiple-choice questions where respondents were expected to choose the appropriate answer. Familiarity of respondents with terms enriched or functional product and especially omega - 3 eggs was also evaluated based on multiple-choice questions. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions on the willingness to purchase enriched products, the health benefits of functional ingredients in enriched products, the accuracy of data available on products declaration, scientific evaluation of health benefits of such products and the like. In this part of the questionnaire, respondents had to evaluate their agreement with given statements on functional food. Level of agreement was evaluated according to Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 2 = mostly disagree, 3 = partially disagree, 4 = no opinion, 5 = partially agree, 6 = mostly agree, 7 = completely agree). Data collected from the survey were analysed using the statistical program SAS 9.3. for Windows. The differences between the observed distribution of responses and the expected distribution of responses were tested with Chi-square test. The data collected from the responses evaluated by the Likert scale (1-7) were analysed by one-way analysis of variance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic profile of respondents and the frequency of respondents' responses to questions posed in the survey. The results are presented for the whole sample and separated for male and female respondents. The majority of respondents (70) were of younger age (19-29 years), which is 53.00% of the total respondents, with more women than men (57.5% and 46.2% respectively). Furthermore, 20 respondents (15.2%) were in the age group of 50-59 years, while 17 respondents were between 30-39 years, 16 respondents aged 40-49, and only 9 respondents were older than 60. More men (11.5%) than women (3.8%) were in the oldest age group (older than 60). As most of the respondents were younger, to the question of marital status 53.8% of them responded they were single, 43.2% were married, only 3% were widows, while none of the respondents was divorced. As many as 68.94% of respondents had a university degree, and

they were mostly women (78.8%). There were 3.03% respondents with primary education (a higher proportion of men 5.8%), 28.03% of respondents had high school education and in this group men were present in higher proportion compared to women (40.4%: 20.0 %). The largest number of respondents were students (42.4%) or employed in a company (35.6%), with a family income of over 5001 HRK

(60.6%). Out of a total of 80 respondents who received an income greater than 5001 HRK, 61.3% were women and 59.6% men. When asked if there was a patient in their families, most respondents, 107 of them (81.1%), answered negatively, and only 25 respondents (18.9%) stated that there were patients in the family who could be potential users of enriched and/or functional products.

Table 1 Sociodemographic profile of respondents (n = 132)

Tablica 1. Socio-demografski profil ispitanika (n=132)

Survey questions Anketna pitanja	Total - Ukupno (n = 132)		Male - Muški (n = 52; 39.4%)		Female - Ženski (n = 80; 60.6%)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age of respondents						
<18	-	-	-	-	-	-
19-29	70	53.0	24	46.2	46	57.5
30-39	17	12.9	8	15.4	9	11.3
40-49	16	12.1	6	11.5	10	12.5
50-59	20	15.2	8	15.4	12	15.0
>60	9	6.8	6	11.5	3	3.8
Level of education						
Primary education	4	3.03	3	5.8	1	1.3
High school education	37	28.03	21	40.4	16	20.0
University degree	91	68.94	27	53.8	63	78.8
Marital status						
Single	71	53.8	27	51.9	44	55.0
Married	57	43.2	24	46.2	33	41.3
Divorced	-	-	-	-	-	-
Widowed	4	3.0	1	1.9	3	3.8
Employment						
Employed (in a company)	47	35.6	22	42.3	25	31.3
Self-employed (own business)	1	0.8	1	1.9	-	-
Housewife	3	2.3	-	-	3	3.8
Pensioner	5	3.8	4	7.7	1	1.3
Farmer	5	3.8	4	7.7	1	1.3
Unemployed	3	2.3	3	5.8	-	-
Student	56	42.4	16	30.8	40	50
Trader	1	0.8	1	1.9	-	-
Doctor / nurse	3	2.3	-	-	3	38.0
Other	8	6.1	1	1.9	7	8.8
Patient in the family						
Yes	25	18.9	12	23.1	13	16.3
No	107	81.1	40	76.9	67	83.8
Family income						
<2000 HRK	5	3.8	2	3.8	3	3.8
2000 HRK - 3000 HRK	20	15.2	5	9.6	15	18.8
3001 HRK - 5000 HRK	27	20.5	14	26.9	13	16.3
>5001 HRK	80	60.6	31	59.6	49	61.3

Table 2 shows the frequency of respondents' answers on the benefit and safety of enriched or functional products as well as the willingness to consume omega-3 eggs which are produced and can be purchased in the Republic of Croatia. According to the survey results, 45 respondents (34.1%) have no definite view on whether the consumption of enriched products is completely safe.

Although there is a large number of those who do not have an opinion on the above statement, it is important to point out that only 3.0% of respondents think that this food is not safe for consumption on daily basis. When asked whether they believe that enriched products or functional foods have the effect that is written on the declaration, the highest frequency of responses (41 respondents) was that they did not have an opinion on it. The following are the answers in which respondents state they are not convinced of the accuracy of the positive effect of the enriched product as stated on the declaration (3 = 27 respondents, 2 = 18 respondents and 1 = 7 respondents). Among those who believe in accuracy of information available on declaration 13.6% of respondents partially believe in its accuracy, 9.8% mostly believe and 6.1% completely believe that product efficacy is as is stated on the declaration. Furthermore, only 10.6% of respondents believe that the effectiveness of functional products has been scientifically verified, while only 3.0% of them do not believe this. Although the majority of respondents (70), among a total of 132 respondents, were of younger age (19-29 years), it is worrying that these of respondents do not have a definite opinion on whether the functional products are scientifically verified or not (38.6%). To the question whether the enriched product is a manufacturer's fraud, a large proportion of respondents replied that they disagreed with this statement (18.9%), while 18.2% and 15.9% respectively mostly disagreed or partially disagreed. However, even on this issue, most respondents answered that they had no definite opinion (32.6%). There were 7 (i.e. 5.3%) respondents who believed that the functional food was is a fraud of the producer. With the claim that healthy people do not need to consume functional products, 27 respondents completely disagree, while 9 and 25 disagree mostly or partially. Twelve (9.1%) believe that healthy people do not need to consume functional products while 41 or 31.1% do not have opinion about the said claim. After information about functi-

onal food and its effectiveness on health, and that omega-3 eggs can be purchased in the Republic of Croatia, 18.2% of respondents said they were completely ready to include omega-3 eggs in their daily diet, 27.3% of them are not sure, while 8.3% of respondents are not willing to buy the product. The acceptance of functional food by Montenegrin consumers has been studied by Stojanović et al. (2013) and authors find out that the level of education, family income, product availability and information on health benefits of different functional products have a major effect on the customer decision to purchase this food. The authors point out that the respondents, who are well informed about the positive effect of functional food on health, will find it easier to decide to buy these products and incorporate them into daily nutrition. In the research on consumer perceptions of eating eggs in the Republic of Croatia, Kralik et al. (2014) find out that 30.7% of respondents are familiar with the concept of functional food, while 69.3% are not familiar with the term. Their results are consistent with the results of this research. Markovina et al. (2011) carried out a research on the perception of the young population on functional food. Results show that 40% of respondents are familiar with the concept of functional food and that 27% of them buy functional food products. The authors also point out that younger consumers are more inclined to buy functional products than older ones. Tomić et al. (2014) conducted a survey on functional food and they used cluster analysis to analyse obtained data. According to the responses, the respondents were divided into three groups: functional food lovers, indifferent to functional products, and those who had doubts or did not believe in the positive effects of functional products. The authors concluded that respondents who are functional food lovers buy it because they believe in health benefits of such products. Furthermore, respondents who are indifferent to functional foods, have a positive attitude about health benefits but they are not convinced about the accuracy of the information on declaration and the excellent quality of such products. The third group of respondents are those who doubt about the benefits of functional food. There were more men in this cluster than women, and they showed an interest in healthy eating, but the interest for introduction of new products in the daily diet was small or none. The authors also state that 47% of respondents said that they knew what

the functional food is while 53.0% did not hear about it concept. Asked whether they would buy functional products in the future, 54.4% of respondents answered that they certainly would, 34.8% were unsure about it, while 10.8% responded that they were not going to buy those products. In his research, Ibrahim (2016) showed the views of Jordanian consumers on functional foods and stated that people with higher levels of education and higher monthly income had a positive attitude towards functional products and they are willing to buy and consume them. The author in his paper states that the customer's gender has an effect on the attitude towards purchasing and consuming functional products, pointing out that women are more likely to buy foods that have a positive effect on health in comparison to men ($p < 0.05$). The author also pointed out that elderly respondents are 4.23 times more aware that the consumption of functional products has a positive effect on health compared to younger respondents. According to the results obtained in this research, only 23.5% respondents ($n = 132$) consumed omega-3 eggs. There was no

difference in frequency of consumption of omega-3 eggs between different age groups ($\chi^2 = 4.97$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.29$). On the other hand, there was a significant difference in frequency of different age groups within the group of respondents who did not consume omega-3 eggs ($\chi^2 = 99.25$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.01$). The youngest respondents (19 -29 years) were the most common (59.4 %) in the group that did not consume omega-3 eggs in comparison to other age groups, which can be compared with Poulsen (1999) who states that older consumers (older than 55) are more inclined to purchase functional products than younger ones. Also, there was significant difference in frequency of consumption of omega-3 eggs within the youngest (19 -29) age group ($\chi^2 = 35.70$; $df = 1$; $p < 0.01$) where only 16.7 % respondents consumed omega-3 eggs. There was no significant difference between frequencies of consumption of omega-3 eggs within the other age groups. Highest percentage of respondents that consumed omega -3 eggs was in the group of 50 - 59 years, where 66.7 respondents said that they consumed omega-3 eggs. Urala and Lähteenmäke

Table 2 The respondents' opinion on the benefit and safety of enriched or functional products as well as the will to consume omega-3 eggs

Tablica 2. Mišljenje ispitanika o korisnosti i ispravnosti obogaćenih odnosno funkcionalnih proizvoda kao i volja za konzumacijom omega-3 jaja

Rating according to Likert scale Ocjena prema Likertovoj skali	Indicator Pokazatelji	Answers-Odgovori ^a						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Consuming enriched products or functional foods is completely safe	Frequency %	4 3.0	7 5.3	21 15.9	45 34.1	29 22	8 6.1	18 13.6
I believe that enriched products or functional food have the effect that is written on the declaration	Frequency %	7 5.3	18 13.6	27 20.5	41 31.1	18 13.6	13 9.8	8 6.1
Enriched products or functional foods are scientifically proven products	Frequency %	4 3.0	15 11.4	23 17.4	51 38.6	22 16.7	3 2.3	14 10.6
Enriched products or functional foods are a total lie (fraud) of the manufacturer	Frequency %	25 18.9	24 18.2	21 15.9	43 32.6	9 6.8	3 2.3	7 5.3
Healthy people should not use enriched products or functional foods	Frequency %	27 20.5	9 6.8	25 18.9	41 31.1	12 9.1	6 4.5	12 9.1
After informing on the positive effect of omega-3 eggs on human health and the possibility of buying them on the Croatian market, would you be willing to buy and introduce them into your diet ^b	Frequency %	11 8.3	11 8.3	14 10.6	36 27.3	17 12.9	19 14.4	24 18.2

^a1 = completely disagree, 2 = mostly disagree, 3 = partially disagree, 4 = no opinion, 5 = partially agree, 6 = mostly agree, 7 = completely agree.

^b1 = completely not willing, 2 = mostly not willing, 3 = partially not willing, 4 = no opinion – neither yes nor no, 5 = partially willing, 6 = mostly willing, 7 = completely willing.

(2007) stated that men and women do not differ in their attitude regarding purchasing and consumption of functional foods. The results of the aforementioned authors related to the respondents' gender are consistent with the results of this research. According to Urala and Lähtenmäke (2007) Finish respondents who generally take care of their health have a positive attitude towards functional food and its consumption in daily nutrition. Although some respondents are familiar with term enriched products and / or functional foods they are not always willing to give up their favourite food to improve their health status (Annunziata and Vecchio, 2011). Krystallis et al. (2008) pointed out that organoleptic properties of the product, particularly taste, can be one of the most important factors that affect the consumer's attitude when purchasing functional foods. The same authors stated that besides the organoleptic properties, consumers consider practical packaging and clarity of product declaration as important features when purchasing functional products. When purchasing enriched or functional products older customers (35-44 years) choose those with less cholesterol and saturated fatty acids compared to younger customers (25-34 years) (Krystallis et al., 2008). Furthermore, they found important whether the product is rich in probiotics, whether the price is the same as of products from conventional animal husbandry systems, and it is a domestic product or not. Kralik et al. (2015) in their paper discussing what the purchasing of functional food products depends on and what are the main problems consumers are concerned with when purchasing functional products: health care, better product quality (taste, appearance, durability), the preference for buying natural food, an acceptable price, practical packaging and brand recognition. Authors pointed out the reasons why consumers refuse to buy functional food. The most important reasons are: lack of information (low perception of the difference between functional, ecological, organic and conventional food), too high prices of such foods and poor availability of these products on the market.

CONCLUSIONS

More women (60.6%) than men (39.4%) participated in this study, and the majority of respondents was between 19 to 29 years (53.0%). Most of the respondents were university students (42.4%)

or employees in different companies (35.6%). Regarding the level of education, the most common were the respondents with high school education (68.94%) while the most common household income was over HRK 5001 (60.6%). The preferences of the respondents on the enriched products were evaluated according to the Likert scale (1-7), with the highest frequency response of 4 to all questions, indicating that the respondents do not have a definite opinion about food products enriched with some nutrient or nutraceutical. In conclusion, the majority of respondents are of younger age and since they don't have defined opinion toward enriched products, it is necessary to provide education on the importance of these products in everyday diet.

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SAŽETAK

Cilj rada bio je procijeniti preferencije potrošača o korisnosti i konzumaciji obogaćenih i/ili funkcionalnih prehrambenih proizvoda s naglaskom na konzumna jaja. Istraživanje preferencija potrošača o korisnosti i konzumaciji obogaćenih kao i funkcionalnih proizvoda provedeno je na 132 ispitanika. Podatci su prikupljeni pomoću anketnog upitnika koji se sastojao od 15 pitanja. Prvih 7 pitanja odnosila su se na socio-demografska obilježja ispitanika (spol, dob, obrazovanje, bračni status, zanimanje, prihodi i slično). Drugi dio upitnika sastojao se od 8 pitanja koja su se odnosila na dobivanje informacija o volji za kupovinu navedenih proizvoda, zdravstvenoj koristi funkcionalnih sastojaka u obogaćenim proizvodima, ispravnosti odnosno znanstvenoj potvrdi deklaracija i slično. U anketi je sudjelovalo više žena (60,6%) nego muškaraca (39,4%). Ukupno gledajući anketi je pristupilo najviše mladih u dobi 19-29 godina (53%), visoko obrazovanih (68,94%) s primanjima većim od 5001 kn (60,6%). Prema mišljenju ispitanika o korisnosti i ispravnosti obogaćenih odnosno funkcionalnih proizvoda kao i volji za konzumacijom omega-3 jaja većina ih zapravo nema mišljenje o ovim proizvodima što se pokazuje time da je najveća učestalost odgovora na postavljena pitanja bilo 4. S obzirom da je većina ispitanika bila mlađe dobi, a prema odgovorima u anketi nemaju definirano mišljenje o obogaćenim proizvodima, neophodno je provoditi edukaciju o važnosti ovih proizvoda u prehrani.

Ključne riječi: preferencije, anketa, obogaćeni proizvodi, funkcionalna hrana, jaja