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MARKETING RESEARCH ABOUT PERCEPTIONS OF PRODUCERS OF ROMANIAN TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the businesses of Romanian producers of agro-food traditional products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Fair. The need of pursuing these issues is emerged from the changes happened on the market of agro-food products in those regarding the transitions to a healthier consumption, to ecological and/or traditional products, in the case of some consumers. Because of these, some producers identified opportunities of developing businesses with traditional Romanian products.

In describing producers' businesses, a qualitative marketing research is undertaken to the Romanian Farmer's Fair, trying to identify future trends of the market of agro-food products.

Key words: traditional products, model of consumption, agro-food products' market, consumer

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe businesses of farmers who trade their agro-food traditional products to the Romanian Farmer's Fair. The need of this research consists of changes on agro-food products market, related to consumption pattern changes from conventional ones towards traditional and/or organic ones, in the case of some categories of consumers. Because of these changes, producers of traditional products have opportunities for relaunching production.

Traditional products take an important place in European Union countries' agribusiness systems, being protected and promoted by law. To Community level, the market of agro-food traditional products is regulated by RC no. 509/2006 of the Council of March, 20th, 2006 regarding special traditional guaranteed agricultural and food products. In article 2 of the regulation, terms of specificity, traditional and traditional specificity are defined.

Specificity is a characteristic through which an agricultural or food product may be distinguished clearly from other similar agricultural or food products, belonging to the same category. Traditional products are those products for which it's producing and trading on community market have been transmitted from generation to generation, and this fact can be proved. The period considered is at least twenty five years. Traditional guaranteed specificity has been recognised by the Community by its registration in conformity with the quoted regulation.

To national level, in Romanian legislation the market of traditional products is regulated through Government Decision no. 134 of February 6th 2008 regarding agro-

food products guaranteed traditional specifications. The law defines the terms and establishes the authorities responsible with documents' control submitted for obtaining protection of a traditional guaranteed specification for an agricultural or food product. It also verifies the labelling and using the national or community logo which makes differences among products on the market, obtained in industrial systems.

Because of their important place on the agro-food market, traditional products' producing, trading and consumption are encouraged through the Program „Romanian Farmer's fair". This is a project of the group "Radu Anton Roman" and Association „Friends of Romanian Farmer's Museum", DC Communication, Cultural Association Macondo, Fundation ADEPT and media partners. This fair has been organised since October 2008 and continues in present, in different locations in Bucharest, on Saturday and Sunday.

The present study describes the businesses of producers of traditional agro-food products, sold to the Romanian Farmer's Fair, trying to identify premises for designing the future trends of the market of these products.

Research objectives and relevance

The objectives of this piece of research describing the businesses of producers of traditional products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Trade are:

1. Identifying groups of producers of traditional products on regions of origin, types of products and type of businesses;
2. Identifying the fact whether producers belong or not, or they intend to belong to associations of producers;
3. Identifying producers' experience in obtaining traditional products;
4. Identifying types of Romanian traditional products obtained and traded by producers from different areas;
5. Identifying the frequency of producers' participation to this fair;
6. Identifying the average quantity of products purchased to the fair, on types of products;
7. Identifying the ingredients and recepies used for obtaining traditional products;
8. Listing the prices of traditional products, on types of products;
9. Identifying producers' perceptions related to the place of trading traditional products;
10. Identifying producers' perceptions related to the utility of this fair;
11. Identifying producers' interests to participating to other event related to traditional products;
12. Identifying trends of obtaining and trading traditional products;
13. Identifying opportunities for developing businesses with traditional products.

The relevance of the research consists of changes on agro-food products' market. The results of the study may contribute to identifying the regions with potential and vocation to obtaining traditional brands, which may be launched on the market. It also may contribute to increase efficiency in taking advantages of the local resources.

Research questions

The questions of the marketing research related to describing the businesses of producers of traditional products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Fair are:

1. How are producers of traditional products organised in regions, types of products and types of businesses?
2. Which are the regions of origin of traditional products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Trade?
3. What is the experience of the producers in obtaining traditional products? Which are the other ways of trading traditional products?
4. What kind of traditional products are traded to the Romanian Farmer's Fair?
5. Which are the recepeices used by producers in obtaining traditional products?
6. Which is the frequency of producers' participation to this fair and the average quantity of products purchased to the fair, on types of products?
7. Which are the prices of traditional products?
8. Is the fair an opportunity to develop businesses with traditional products?
9. Which are the trends in obtaining and trading traditional products?
10. Are there any opportunities for developing businesses with traditional products?

Research methodology

A piece of marketing research has been undertaken for describing the businesses of producers of traditional products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Fair, using qualitative methods. For collecting the data, the technique of semi-structured interviewed has been used, with a quid of discussion. The respondents have been selected among the participants of the fair. They are producers of traditional products coming from Muntenia, Moldavia and Transylvania. They are between 23 and 50 years, both men and women, married, with 2-8 members in the family.

For analysing the data, critical thinking methods have been used: argument analysis, explanation, evaluation, and inference. The results of the research were validated using the method of negative case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Counter-evidence is present in the processes of analysing the data and elaborating conclusions (Bardi, 2003).

Data analysis

Farmers come from different regions of Romania: Fundata – Bran, Făgăraș, Criș, Bucovina, Moldovița, Botoșani, Maramureș, Argeș, and Bihor: Tulca, Târnava Mare, and Sighișoara. They are organised as individuals or as companies. Individual producers are from Fundata, Bucovina, Crit, Arges and they work with their families of 2-4 members. Farmers from Botosani, Bucovina and Maramurea are organised in companies of 5-9 employees. Some producers are members in different farmers' associations.

The products made and traded to the fair may vary from one area to another (table 1). Sausages, cheese and meat products are made in Fundata, Bran and Fagaras. Fruits and vegetables products, fish and pastries are made in Bucovina and Botosani. Meat products are made in Maramures, and jams, bread and teas are made in Sighisoara. Strong alcoholic beverages are made in Arges and Bihor.

Table 1 - Products traded to the Romanian Farmer's Fair and their area of origin

No.	Area of origin	Types of products traded to the fair
1	Fundata – Bran	Sausages, cheese fume, and other specialities of cheese
2	Fundata – Bran	Specialities of sheep cheese
3	Fagaras	Meat products
4	Bucovina	Bakeries, jams, vegetables' products
5	Bucovina	Butter, fish special prepared, cheese fume, traditional cakes with cheese
6	Bucovina – Moldovita	Syrups, jams
7	Botosani	Traditional meat products
8	Bucovina	Traditional meat products
9	Maramures	Traditional meat products
10	Tarnava – Mare	Jams, dries fruits, saucer conserved vegetables, bread
11	Sighisoara	Jams, bread, tea
12	Crit – Brasov	Goat milk products
13	Crit – Brasov	Jams, bread, vegetables' products
14	Arges	Strong alcoholic beverage made of plums
15	Comuna Tulca – Bihor	Strong alcoholic beverage made of fruits

Asked about „What is the quantity of traditional products sold per year?” producers were not able to answer, because they do not keep accountancy, just some of them answered with approximation.

In Table 2 is presented the situation regarding the answers to the question „What number of animals do you exploit for obtaining traditional products?” It can be noticed that the farmer from Fundata-Bran, who produces sausages, cheese fume, and other specialities of cheese exploits 500 sheep and 50 cows. The farmer from Fundata-Bran, who produces specialities of sheep cheese, exploits 400 sheep. The producer of meat products from Fagaras slaughters 10 pigs and 3 veal per week and so on.

Table 2 - The quantities of products obtained, livestock, area of origin and type of products traded to the Romanian Farmer’s fair

No.	Area of origin	Types of products traded to the fair	Quantities produced	Livestock
1	Fundata – Bran	Sausages, cheese fume, and other specialities of cheese	-	500 sheep, 50 cows
2	Fundata – Bran	Specialities of sheep cheese	-	400 sheep
3	Fagaras	Meat products	-	10 pigs and 3 veal per week
4	Bucovina	Bakeries, jams, vegetables’ products	Vegetables’ products – 500 jars, bakeries – 1000 kg, jams 1000 jars	No livestock
5	Bucovina	Butter, fish special prepared, cheese fume, traditional cakes with cheese	1000 fishes, 2000 butter pieces, 300 cheese pieces	5 cows
6	Bucovina – Moldovita	Syrups, jams	-	-
7	Botosani	Traditional meat products	-	5 cows, 8 pigs, 7 veals per week
8	Bucovina	Traditional meat products	-	15 cows, 18 veals, 2 pigs per week
9	Maramures	Traditional meat products	-	3 cows, 6 veals, 5 pigs per week
10	Tarnava – Mare	Jams, dries fruits, saucer conserved vegetables, bread	-	-
11	Sighisoara	Jams, bread, tea	-	-
12	Crit – Brasov	Goat milk products	-	100 goats
13	Crit – Brasov	Jams, bread, vegetables’ products	-	-
14	Arges	Strong alcoholic	-	-

		beverage made of plums		
15	Comuna Tulca – Bihor	Strong alcoholic beverage made of fruits	300 litres	No livestock

Because of the lack of data regarding the quantities of products obtained, it comes difficult to draw conclusions related to the economical efficiency of producing traditional products. It can be said that producers do not belong to the category of small producers, their businesses having high dimensions, taking into account the number of animals and hectares they exploit.

To the question „Which is the system of breeding the animals?” all farmers answered that the system is the extensive one. This premise goes to the conclusion that products made might be considered natural and producers may obtain ecological certificates for them.

In those regarding the experience of producers in obtaining and trading traditional products, this varies between one and 10 years. Still, there are producers considering that they make these products for 100 years: „we rose with them and now we keep on going family traditions”. On average, the producers’ experience is 4.5 years.

Some producers come to the fair weekly – producers from Fundata, Bucovina, Crit and Arges, and the others twice or once per month.

To the question „What ingredients do you use for obtaining traditional products?”, all producers answered that they use traditional recepeices and natural ingredients: „natural ingredients and recepies coming from my parents”, „traditional recepies coming from my parents and natural ingredients, without additives or chemicals”, „Romanian traditional recepies” etc. Among the ingredients mentioned by producers are: milk, salt, sheep and veal meat, pepper, garlic etc.

There are not enough data regarding the prices of traditional products, just for fishes – 65 lei/kg (15 euro), vegetables’ specialities – 15 lei/jar (3,6 euro), jam – 10 lei/jar (2,4 euro), syrup – 10 lei/jar (2,4 euro), strong alcoholic beverage – 50 lei/litre (12 euro). It must be mentioned that the same products obtained in industrial system have lower prices. The prices’ gap is justified by the high quality of traditional products, compared to industrial ones, natural ingredients and special taste.

Producers who come to this event consider the fair as being welcome for small producers, because it helped them to promote their products and the area they come from. It is well organised, civilised, with a friendly environment: „It is a good idea, welcome for small producers who used to stay days in Brasov markets and sell nothing”. „Very well organised and useful for small producers”, „A friendly environment” etc.

Producers who come to Romanian Farmer's fair consider this event very useful, because it represents an opportunity to keep and promote Romanian food tradition from areas where producers come from. It helps them to sell their products and it promotes consumption of natural food and Romanian traditional food taste."It promotes both our products and the local tradition of areas we come from", "It is useful because it enables us to gain money and to promote our area", "Without this fair, our last chance to keep tradition alive dies". Producers consider that, compared to other fairs, this one promotes the area the producers are coming from.

Some producers have been participated to other events related to traditional products: in Italy, to an event organized through the project Romanian Farmer's Fair and Village Museum.

To the question „What measures do you consider as being necessary for developing businesses of traditional products?” producers answered that the state, authorities and other organisations, associations and foundations must imply themselves in this process. Another identified need consists in organizing more fairs of this kind.

Conclusions of the research

Producers of traditional products consider this fair welcome for small producers, because it helped them to promote their products and areas, it is well organized, civilised, having a friendly environment.

Producers consider useful this fair because it represents an opportunity to keep and promote Romanian traditional food from areas they come from. It also enables them to gain money from selling their products and it promotes consumption of natural products and the taste of Romanian food. Producers consider that, compared to other fairs, this one promotes the area the producers are coming from.

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