

GREEK CONSUMER'S BEHAVIOUR TO MEAT PRODUCTS

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Greek people have a high meat consumption per capita among the countries of E.U. Also they like meat products. This research aims at identifying consumers behaviour and attitudes towards meat products.

Their opinions are very important for marketing activities. Moreover people's preferences affect the quantity and the quality of consumed processed meat. This research consists of two parts, the qualitative and the quantitative research. From the socio-economic characteristics of the consumers, the age influences most the consumption of meat products.

THEORY

Consumer behaviour is very important in all marketing functions. A definition says that: "Consumer behaviour is (1) the mental and physical acts of (2) individuals, households or other decision making units concerned with ultimate consumption involving (3) the acquisition, own production, use and, in some cases, the dis-possession of products and services" (Arndt, 1986). Knowledge of consumer behaviour and attitudes to food can help the government to plan its policy. Although in most Western nations there is no explicit food policy, this does not mean that governments do not have an impact on food and family consumption decisions (Josling and Ritson, 1986, pp. 3-4).

Consumer makes his decision after the influence of anthropological, sociological and economic factors, which together act on the personal psychology that makes him decide whether or not to buy a product or service. On

ABSTRACT

This research tries to identify consumers behaviour to meat products, in the Thessaloniki region, in Greece. The theory of consumer behaviour and the qualitative research, involving consumer group discussions, establish the basis for this work. The quantitative research shows that people like meat products, but avoid consumption of these for health reasons. The age of the consumers was found significantly related to some of their attitudes.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette recherche porte sur l'analyse du comportement des consommateurs grecs vis-à-vis de la consommation de viande dans la région de Thessalonique en Grèce. La théorie du comportement du consommateur, la recherche qualitative et les discussions de groupe sont à la base de ce travail. La recherche quantitative démontre que les gens aiment la viande, mais évitent sa consommation pour des raisons de santé. L'âge des consommateurs résulte être significativement lié à certaines formes de comportement.

the other hand, two more factors affect the personal psychology of the consumer; i.e. natural factors (climate, geography, etc.) and communicational factors (advertising, etc.) (Magnissalis, 1981, pp. 58-61).

Consumers' patterns of purchases are related to their personality, and this is very important for Marketing strategy. But many times this relation between personality and a product or brand is very difficult to identify.

Another factor, which influences consumer behaviour is perception. The

concept of perception can be represented as follows: S-P-R

S represents the stimuli, P the perception and R the response. Selectivity in perception suggests that it is invariably partial and directed by various interests (Block, Roering, 1979, p. 222).

Remembering is another factor which is the deliberate recalling of an idea or the spontaneous coming up (or representation) of something which we have perceived, known or felt (Magnissalis, 1981, pp.25-100). This is important for consumer behaviour because product images and characteristics are stored in either long term memory (this is the case of preferred, usual brands and products, with brand loyal customers) or in short term memory as a consequence of recent exposure to advertising, public relations or other promotional attempts. The memory of consumers' needs to be reinforced many times (Magdalinos, 1974, p. 56).

Learning contributes a lot to consumer behaviour. A simple definition of learning is the establishment for the individual of an association between a stimulus and a response, without any previous connection. That is, when an organism is exposed to a stimulus and a response is evoked, which represents changes in its behaviour or attitudes, we can say that learning has taken place (Richards and Greenlaw, 1972, p. 152).

Learning clearly plays an important role in consumer

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behaviour. All consumption experience, exposure to advertising and a great deal of interaction with other people constitutes the learning process, during which tastes are formed and modified, and brand selections and loyalties are built. For this reason the marketing specialist must take it into account. The effect of learning on consumer behaviour, for Th. Smith, involves twenty steps, from the time when the consumer sees an advertisement until he makes a decision on purchase (Smith, in Magnissalis, 1981, pp. 106-108).

Motivation can be defined as a behavioural tendency involved in striving for goals (Verhallen and Raaij, 1986). Motives do not necessarily affect behaviour. A motive is directed towards an object, condition or activities and those are called goals. Generally, a goal is considered anything which will satisfy or reduce the striving. Goals are products of individual personality, life, style, self-image, striving and culture. In marketing terms a goal object is any product or service that reduces the need or is expected to do so (Cohen, 1981, pp. 199-201).

Another factor that effects consumer behaviour is attitude. Attitude generally is the reaction to some person, object or situation with a positive or negative manner (Magnissalis, 1981, p. 132). There are different methods of measuring consumer's attitudes to which we will refer later. Attitudes can be "acquired" (or picked up) by consumers or can be changed due to the influence of four main sources:

1. Exposure to information,
2. Group membership and Reference Group influence (primary, secondary or aspirant groups),
3. The environment, cultural and physical,
4. Consumption experiences (satisfaction/dissatisfaction).

Attitude change can be affected by the way of the communications of the following information: 1. Who sent the message, 2. What the message says, 3. To whom the message applies.

Socialisation is a very important part of human life. Brim has defined it as "the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society" and "for the newborn child, socialisation means adoption to society which already is a going concern" (Ziegler and Child, in Gronhaug and Venkatesh, 1968); The consumer cannot be expected to change his way of living in order to adjust to a product. The new product had to fit the lifestyle of the consumer (Watkins, 1986). In Marketing, the size of families has a considerable influence on consumers' habits and purchases. Large families spend less money on food per person, and the food they buy tends to be from cheaper sources (Darrah, 1967, p. 74).

Another important factor which affects consumers' preferences is age. Usually, older people, because of their limited activity and possible health problems, consume

less food, with lower energy and fat, than younger people (Darrah, 1967, p. 76). Children need the best food, rich in vitamins, minerals, protein etc. Younger children usually eat less than older ones. Females usually eat less than males, and smaller children generally eat less than larger ones (Price et al, 1978, pp. 610-611). The presence of pre-school age children in a family reduces the number of meals eaten away from home. On the contrary, households without "homemakers" have more meals away from home (Prochaska and Schrimper, 1973). Young people accept new products and new brands more easily than older ones and usually demand "convenient foods", i.e. they ask for more services in the food they buy.

The life cycle of the family is a way of thinking about the stages through which it passes and how they influence consumer's needs (Tsaklaganos, 1980, pp. 116-118). The role of members within a family may also be important. Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, for example, draw attention to who takes the decisions to purchase and the role of the children (Magnissalis, 1981, pp. 151-156). "The role of the husband as the breadwinner and the controller of the purse strings" has diminished now. More wives go out to work and the children of a family as well, many times earning much more money than their fathers. As a result the role of the husband as decision - maker has declined substantially (Martin, 1989). To some extent, consumers who belong to the same social class can be expected to have similar behaviour and attitudes. The main characteristics of classes are: Wealth, in the form of income and property; Occupation, involving in particular, education; and Power, for example, political, economic, military, religious etc.

An individual's consumption is not only influenced by the members of his family (spouse, children) or his friends etc. but also the person of the groups to which he belongs. Consumers may belong to different groups (Magnissalis, 1981, pp. 168-170). For example, the same consumer can belong to groups which are connected with family, religion, work, sports, school, church, social clubs etc. and receive influences which interact with each other (Magdalinos, 1974, p.64). But the primary and most basic group is "the family" (Richards and Greenlaw, 1972, pp. 201-202).

Women have a great influence on consumer behaviour. Nowadays women prefer to work even if they don't have financial problems. They still plan their meals and organize food shopping, but these meals are not only eaten in the home but also outdoors, or around the television, or as part of other social activities. In this way, snacks and convenient food are replacing some traditional meals (Baron, 1988). Moreover, they are less price conscious and prefer famous brand products. Modern consumers are discerning in their purchases of convenience products and are looking for food which they really like (MacKenzie, 1976).

Anthropology studies the institution of a society and the ways in which they provide a cultural environment for member. Using this approach cultural anthropologists help marketing specialists to identify the causes of decline in old markets and in particular contribute to success in foreign markets (Winick, 1961). Also, within national cultures, various subcultures develop, racial, regional or age differences within the form nation. From his birth, a person grows up into society in which he lives and learns the values and the habits which are important. He contracts his culture through the process of socialization.

Anthropologists have shown a great interest in food habits. People offer food to express hospitality both in their homes and by giving food away; many of the major questions concerning food habits are in reality moral and social questions, rather than nutritional.

Religion also affects people's food consumption enormously. Special kinds of vital food are prepared and eaten on different religious days (including fasting days) and also "feasts related to births, baptisms, school graduations, farewell, wakes and funerals and memorial feasts for the deceased". Other anthropologists and nutritionists are interested in food consumption as: i) procurement; ii) preparation; iii) distribution; iv) consumption and v) disposal into the households (Powers and Powers in Douglas (ed.), 1984, pp. 42-68).

In recent years many people have changed fundamental eating patterns. These changes in eating patterns reflect the dramatic changes in retailing. Supermarkets are going to be replaced by the warehouse store, the gourmet market and hypermarket. On the other hand, the number of retail stores for convenience food is increasing day by day. In Greece one particular area with a big future is the take-away meal and meal delivered industry. (Senauer, 1990). This area of food delivery has a big future in Greece where, pizza and spaghetti are delivered, and more recently "home-made" Greek meals.

The eating habits, which have changed and continue to change in Western countries, have already started to take place in Greece as well. For example the working hours of supermarkets have changed (opening all day) microwave ovens, deep freezers, and convenience foods are now widely used in Greece. Moreover, in the villages people consume home made sausages during the Christmas period.

Economic factors influence consumer behaviour. According to them all goods in commodity space can be purchased by the consumer if he has the ability to do so (Ferguson, 1972, p. 40). For research on the economic behaviour of consumers one can categorize a nation's households as families and single-dwelling individuals (consumer units) which have an income and transfer payments or save and spend money for consumption of different goods or services (Heilbrone, 1972, p. 70). In-

dividual incomes are different from one region to another in the same country, from one community to another in the same region, and from one household to another in the same community.

Moreover, one person's income may be different from time to time for various reasons, such as work hours, wage rates, illness etc. Also, incomes are not evenly distributed on account of the political or economic systems within countries. For marketing, two observations relevant to income are important. First, the proportion of income which is spent on food has declined, and second, incomes have increased (Darrah, 1967, pp.68-69). The higher income households have the tendency to buy "quality" products and "services" such as higher priced meals as opposed to low income households (Prochaska and Schimper, 1973).

In addition advertising has played an important role in consumer behaviour for thousands of years. In ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and Pompeii the use of advertising was well known. Nowadays advertising through television, radios, newspapers, magazines, billboards, handbills, books, matches etc. has had a dramatically impact on purchases and consumption (Darrah, 1967, p. 77).

Consumers are confused by the plethora of messages from the media about food and health. It is surprising how food manufactures re-design products to convey an image that the product is natural even if it is processed. A good example is fish fingers (Baron, 1988, p. 12).

Also the weather affects the consumption of meat products. It is also important to know that the meat products or processed meat keep the same value as the kind of meat from which they have been cut and depend on their proportion of fat, and from the quantity they have processed. Their difference from the same fresh meat is only the proportion of vitamins, because some of these are destroyed during the sterilization process. This kind of food contains some additives or preservatives and for this reason it is claimed to be better for consumers health not to use them as a main meal, but as a snack or appetizer etc. (Food and Consumer, 1986, p. 34; Pappalias, 1981, pp. 201-231).

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The qualitative research took place during July, September and October, 1987. The total number of the consumer groups was eight. The location of the research was the region of Thessaloniki including two villages Sindos and Vassilika. Personal method of interview was employed to collect the data needed for this research. A small tape recorder was used. The consumers of the focus groups differed in age, education, occupation and residence.

From the qualitative research it was found that women buy various kinds of processed meat, mainly for the children. They use it in sandwiches or pizza. They use these products for a quick meal or breakfast and as a good "meze" for the Greek drink "ouzo". These kinds of food are not for daily consumption, because people believe that processed meat in general is not healthy food. Older people buy them seldomly.

In this region, people buy salami, bacon, "parisaki", "murtadela", traditional sausages, "zambon" and frankfurters. Christmas is a popular time for the purchase of meat products. "Zambon" is the favorite kind of meat product for children. People complain that most of them are packed in large quantities, they are expensive, they can not be stored for a long time, they contain preservatives, and for this reason they do not trust them. Moreover meat products are usually offered with "ouzo" or beer to unexpected visitors.

THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The quantitative research was undertaken in the Thessaloniki region in 1988. A questionnaire was used which was drawn based on the qualitative research results and the relevant literature. The five scales attitudes - method of Likert were used (Freund, 1984, pp.239-242, Chisnall, 1986, pp.88-94). The five scales were scored 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 from favorable to unfavorable statements.

QUESTIONNAIRE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of the questionnaire was based on the results of the qualitative research. The Nielsen Research Company found out that Greek people have evolved to being predominantly carnivorous in recent years. Now, 87% of households consume fresh meat; 62% chicken; 28% meat products, and 11% frozen meat, at least once per week. The same results were received from the own qualitative research. Also, we identify that Greek people have interesting attitudes to meat products. Age was expected to be relevant to attitudes such as "meat products are harmful;" "people with health problems avoid eating meat products"; "old people should avoid eating meat products"; "meat products are consumed throughout the year"; "meat products are not a good source of vitamins and minerals"; and lastly "people do not trust meat products".

THE METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

According to the population of every area, the sample

size was estimated or stratified (Crimp, 1985, pp. 54-57; Freund 1984, pp. 239-242). The number of the collected questionnaires was 220 (Chisnall, 1986, pp. 88-94). It was a random sample, because in this kind of research we can not collect data easily in any other way. Personal interview was applied because it has a lot of advantages compared to other methods (Daoutopoulos, 1989, pp. 55-57).

The analysis of the questionnaires took place at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, on the NUMAC computer facility, using the SPSS_x statistical package. Sample frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the data in the case of attitudes, these were also analysed by the mean score. Moreover, demographic characteristics of the consumers (as age), were cross-tabulated with different attitudes, in order to test the hypothesis. For the cross-tabulations, the chi-square test of independence was used (Freund, 1984, pp. 339-353; Manos, 1985, pp. 38-39; Siardos, 1979, pp. 45-46).

THE SAMPLE

People who answered the questionnaires, live in the region of Thessaloniki. About 80% live in urban areas. 50% of the people live in the municipality of Thessaloniki. A 10% live in semi-urban areas, and in rural areas live the same number of the people (10%).

An 80% of the people of the sample were female, 72% were 26-45 years old, a 7% were under 25 years old and the rest of the people were aged over 46 years old. Additionally, most of the consumers were married (81%). According to the household composition, the usual phenomenon is two children in the Greek family. Moreover, over 10% of households included more than two adults, because there are elderly people, usually parents, who live with their married children.

The level of education is a very important factor in consumer behaviour. 18% of the sample have a low education level (primary school) and a 44% have gone up to the end of secondary education. Finally the rest of the consumers have gone further than secondary school. As for the occupation of the head of the household, 65% of them are white collar workers, about 28% blue collar workers and the rest of them are dependent.

CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TO MEAT PRODUCTS

From the qualitative research we gained the impression that people in Greece tended to avoid meat products. Ranking the statements on meat products relevant to health and their characteristics we get a very interesting profile. Interviewed consumers believe that these meat products are harmful for health, contain preservatives

and additives, are not good for old people or people with health problems, are fat-full and people do not trust them.

Also, the traditional sausages or smoked meat products are not healthy foods. Although children like meat products, people do not think that these are good foods for human health (**table 1**).

Regarding meat products' characteristics, consumers give high scores, because these constitute a quick meal, are used as snacks, "meze", are tasty with good flavor, easily chewed, are consumed throughout the year, and are stored for a long time.

In contrast it is believed that these are prepared from the worst quality of meat or from frozen meat, are expensive, not good value for money, and they considered as heavy food (**table 2**).

Table 1 People's statements on meat products* relevant to health, by the rank of the average scores.

Statement	Average Score
Children like meat products in their sandwiches	4.41
Meat products contain a lot of fat	4.14
Meat products contain preservatives	4.11
Old people avoid eating meat products	4.10
Meat products contain additives	4.08
People with health problems avoid eating meat products	4.03
Meat products are harmful	3.98
Meat products are not good for health	3.91
People do not trust meat products	3.70
People prefer more smoked meat products rather than canned or other kinds of processed meat	3.27
People like imported meat products	3.25
Meat products are not a good source of vitamins and minerals	3.04
Traditional sausages are harmless	2.72
Smoked meat products are healthy	2.63
Traditional sausages are good for health	2.56
Meat products are as nourishing as the kind of meat from which they are prepared	2.36

(*): Sausages, salami or processed meat.

Table 2 People's statements on meat products* relevant to their characteristics by the rank of the average scores.

Statement	Average Score
Meat products are used as a quick meal	4.33
Traditional sausages are very tasty	4.22
Meat products are used as a good meze or snacks	4.17
Meat products are tasty	4.02
Meat products are prepared from the worst quality of meat	3.97
Meat products have a good flavour	3.91
Meat products are easily chewed	3.88
Meat products are consumed throughout the year	3.85
Meat products are stored for a long time	3.81
Meat products are expensive	3.74
Meat products are prepared from frozen meat	3.73
Meat products are consumed every day	3.32
Meat products are good value for money	2.94
Meat products are easily digested	2.75

(*): Sausages, salami or processed meat.

RELATION BETWEEN CONSUMERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES TO MEAT PRODUCTS

Now we examine the relation which exists between the age of consumers and their attitudes towards certain statements regarding the meat products. **Table 3** indicates a list of all the significant relationships. Most of the consumers believe that "Meat products are harmful". Younger people are stronger in this attitude. Consumers believe that "people with health problems avoid eating meat products". This is mostly believed by the people who are not in the young age group. As before, the majority of the consumers agree or strongly agree with the statement that "old people avoid eating meat products". This is slightly more so for those over 26 years old. The majority of the consumers said that "meat products are consumed throughout the year", but this is less strongly felt by younger people. To the statement "meat products are not a good source of vitamins and minerals", half of the consumers aged 46 years and over disagree or strongly disagree with it. People from 26 to 45 years old believe that meat products do not contain vitamins and minerals. It is noticeable that the highest proportion of "no opinion" belongs to the youngest people. Finally, the majority of consumers believe that "people do not trust meat products". The highest proportion of agreements are from people aged 26 to 45 years. Also, one third of the younger people did not have any opinion. The above findings support the hypothesis that the age of consumers influences their attitudes towards meat products.

Table 3 - List of correlates of consumer's socio-economic characteristics and their statements towards meat products.

Socio-economic characteristic of the consumers	Statement	Significance
Age	"Meat products are harmful"	0.0054
	"People with health problems avoid eating meat products"	0.0186
	"Old people avoid eating meat products"	0.0227
	"Meat products are consumed throughout the year"	0.0500
	"Meat products are not a good source of vitamins and minerals"	0.0021
	"People do not trust meat products"	0.0280

CONCLUSIONS

Even though Greek people like meat products a lot, they do not consume them much because they think that they are not good for human health for many reasons, such as that they contain harmful preservatives and additives and are not a good source of vitamins and minerals. In particular, old people and those with health problems avoid eating meat products. These results

support our hypothesis about meat products. Moreover, we hypothesised that the age of the consumers will be significantly related to statements such as "meat products are harmful". This is believed by the majority of the consumers with the younger people believing most strongly in this attitude. Also, consumers believe that people with health problems, avoid eating meat products, and this is most strongly believed by the older people, as well as the statement that "old people avoid eating meat products". "Meat products are consumed throughout the year" consumers said, but this was mostly felt by younger people. "Meat products are not a good source of vitamins and minerals" - mostly older people believed this was not true. Finally the majority of consumers believe that "people do not trust meat products" and especially those aged 26 to 45 years. ●

GLOSSARY

Keftethes: fried meat balls

Meze, mezes or Mezethes: a tidbit, snack or appetizer

Mourta dela: is usually made from boiled minced processed meat

Ouzo: Greek alcoholic drink

Parisaki: is usually made from boiled minced processed meat

Pizza: Italian pie

Zambon: ham

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