

CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TO FROZEN MEAT

IRINI TZIMITRA - KALOGIANNI (*)

The last years Greece had a high meat consumption per capita among the countries of E.U. Greeks usually prefer fresh meat and not frozen. This research was undertaken to investigate people preferences and attitudes towards frozen meat. Moreover, opinions about local or imported meat are included, because Greece imports huge quantities of fresh and frozen meat respectively. Consumer is the last link in the Marketing Chain. So, his preferences and attitudes affect on the quantity and the quality of consumed meat. Also the socio-economic characteristics of the consumers influence the consumption of frozen meat. The primary research was conducted in two phases, first the qualitative research and secondly the quantitative research.

Abstract

This work aims at identifying consumers' attitudes towards frozen meat in the region of Thessaloniki, Greece.

The published data on the theory of the consumers' attitudes are used beside the qualitative research to formulate hypotheses and to structure the questionnaire. The quantitative research shows that people mostly prefer local instead of imported meat and fresh rather than frozen meat for different reasons. Moreover, socio-economic characteristics of consumers' sample, particularly, were found significantly related to some consumers' attitudes.

Résumé

Ce travail vise à identifier les attitudes des consommateurs vis-à-vis de la viande congelée dans la région de Thessaloniki, Grèce.

On utilise des données publiées sur la théorie des attitudes des consommateurs ainsi que la recherche qualitative pour formuler des hypothèses et rédiger un questionnaire. La recherche quantitative montre que les gens préfèrent la viande locale plutôt que la viande importée et la viande fraîche plutôt que la viande congelée pour différentes raisons. Les caractéristiques socio-économiques de l'échantillon de consommateurs se sont avérées particulièrement significatives pour certaines attitudes des consommateurs.

Theory

Food Marketing is very interesting about consumer attitudes. Attitudes are the most significant concept in consumer behaviour "Generally a consumer's attitude can be thought of as his or her basic orientation for or against various alternative products, services, retail outlets, and the like". (Block, Roering, 1979). In Marketing research the specialists need to know that people "think" in general, and what are their attitudes toward new or old products, brand names, prices, promotion campaigns, sales etc. These attitudes are strong or weak, changeable or stable and what the consumers like or dislike (Bliss, 1970). Attitudes are produced from a combination of consumer cultural and group constraints with individuals own personality and need recognition. The motivational forces of human beings are very complicated and they are a mixture of rational forces which are for example, dependability, economy, gain or profit convenience and comfort, and emotional forces such as social approval, pride, status, affection and fear (Jacobs, 1972).



In general, attitude is the reaction to some person, object or situation with a positive or negative manner (Magnissalis, 1981). Attitude can be defined as the prejudice with which people react to a person, group, object, institution or idea (Zeugaridis, 1970). According to psychological literature, attitudes

appear as learned inclinations to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way (Allport, in Cohen, 1981). Attitudes are used in marketing surveys to predict the future behaviour of people to new products or different promotional campaigns. As a result,

(*) Department of Agricultural Economics - Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

public opinion, like beliefs or attitudes, play an important role in the development of policy, f.i. the legislation of consumer protection.

Some scientists argue that attitudes contain three basic components, cognitive, affective and conative (Krech, et al. 1962). The cognitive component refers to the way in which consumers perceive different information about products, advertisements, services or a retail outlet. They believe that these two components (cognitive and affective) are highly correlated and moreover that beliefs and feelings of consumers for a product etc., are usually constant. The cognitive, or "behavioural" component consists of the consumer's intention for acting or expected behaviour (Block, Roering, 1979).

As mentioned above, there is a relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Even if both attitude and behaviour are found to have changed, it does not mean that a change in behaviour was caused by a change in attitude (Hughes, 1973).

About food consumption, it is very important to know, "which food preference patterns are established, maintained and changed" (Shaffer, 1963); also which psychological parameters differentiate food, sub-categories of food and as meat, fruit, vegetables etc., differentiate types of food such as fresh, canned, frozen, differentiate brands and so on. Moreover, whether these psychological parameters are constant, or vary with age, sex, income, social influences etc. (Bayton, 1963).

The qualitative research

The qualitative research was undertaken in summer 1987. The total number of the consumer groups was eight. The area of the research was the Greater of Thessaloniki and two villages around it. The consumers differed in age, education, occupation and residence.

The findings of the qualitative research was very important. It was found that Greek people usually prefer fresh local meat and not frozen. This sample of consumers did not like frozen meat, for different reasons as smell, freshness, tasteless etc., and some for no reason. There are some people, usually from villages, who buy frozen New Zealand lamb or frozen fish, because they can not find fresh fish. (Lioupis, 1990).

The quantitative research

The quantitative research was done in the Thessaloniki region in 1988, using a questionnaire which was based mainly on the qualitative research and

designed following a detailed study of the relevant literature. It was used five scales attitudes according to the Method of Likert (Crimp, 1985; Chisnall, 1986). The five scales were scored 4,5,3,2,1 from favourable statements to unfavourable statements.

Questionnaire hypothesis

The questionnaire hypotheses were based on the results of the qualitative research. So, people tend to prefer Greek fresh meat, liver, poultry and fish, rather than imported fresh or frozen meat; poultry and meat from young animals, selffish, and meat from free pasture animals in general. Moreover a set of statements on the questionnaire referred to frozen meat. The discussion groups provided many different statements about this, with regard to health and its characteristics. We expected age to influence consumer attitudes to frozen meat in general.

The methodology and analysis of the quantitative research

The sample size was estimated or stratified according to population of every area (Crimp, 1985; Freund, 1984). The number of the questionnaires collected was 220 (Chisnall, 1986) and it was a random sample.

The analysis of the questionnaires was undertaken on the NUMAC computer facility at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The SPSSX was the statistical package. Sample frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the data. The attitudes were also analysed by the mean score.

In addition, demographic characteristics of the consumers were cross-tabulated with different attitudes in order to test the hypothesis, using the Chi-

square test of independence (Freund 1984; Kempson, 1987).

The sample

The interviewed people live in the region of Thessaloniki. Most of them live in Urban areas (80%). In the Municipality of Thessaloniki live about fifty per cent of the people. In Semi-Urban areas live an 10% and the same number of people live in rural areas.

From the interviewed people, 81 per cent were female, 72 per cent were 26-45 yearsold, about 7 per cent under 25 years old and the rest people were aged over 46 years old. Most of the consumers were married (81%). About the household composition, the common is two children in the Greek household. Furthermore, over 10 per cent of families included more than two adults. Even in today's society, there are old people, usually parents, who live with their married children.

The education level plays an important role in consumer behaviour. A 18 per cent of the sample have a little education, only to primary school level, and a 44 per cent have gone up to the end of secondary education. The rest of the consumers (38%) have done further than secondary school.

The occupation of the head of the household is characterised as white collar, blue collar and dependents. So, 65 per cent of the heads of household are white collar workers, about 28 per cent blue collar workers and the rest are dependents.

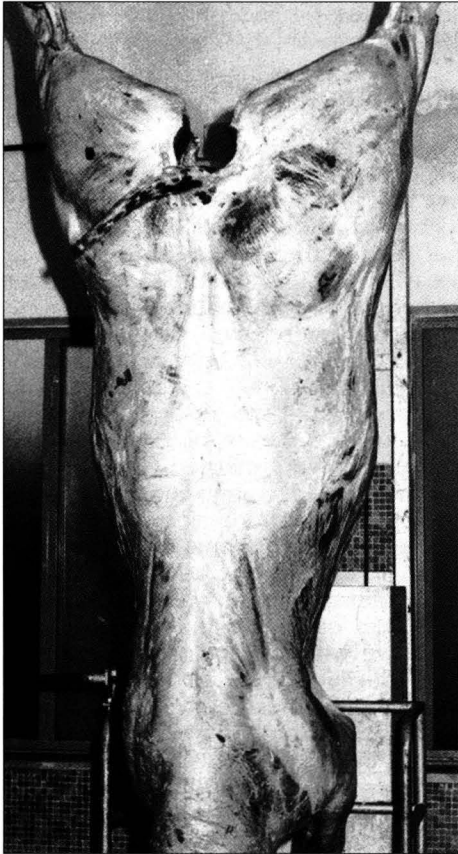
Consumers' feelings about Greek and imported meat, fresh or frozen

Consumers feelings in the region of Thessaloniki are represented by the mean scores (**table 1**), where Greek

Table 1 People's feelings about Greek and imported meat, poultry and fish, fresh or frozen by the average scores.

Kind of meat poultry, fish	Average Score			
	Greek		Imported	
	Fresh	Frozen	Fresh	Frozen
Veal	4.45 (1)	2.35 (3)	2.61 (2)	2.04 (4)
Liver (veal)	4.20 (1)	2.17 (3)	2.33 (2)	1.84 (4)
Pork	4.24 (1)	2.29 (3)	2.52 (2)	2.01 (4)
Kid	4.33 (1)	2.37 (3)	2.57 (2)	1.99 (4)
Lamb	4.24 (1)	2.33 (3)	2.62 (2)	2.04 (4)
Rabbit	3.51 (1)	2.21 (3)	2.31 (2)	1.97 (4)
Chicken	4.35 (1)	2.58 (3)	2.73 (2)	2.22 (4)
Turkey	3.51 (1)	2.21 (3)	2.51 (2)	2.03 (4)
Fish	4.60 (1)	2.76 (3)	2.87 (2)	2.34 (4)

Note: Number in brackets is the rank of the meat kinds scores



fresh meat, poultry and fish have higher than average scores. Consumers don't like imported meat fresh or frozen. Moreover, dislike frozen meat even if it was Greek. The scores in these two last cases are at very low levels (A score of below 3 implies that the sample on balance do not like the product). In this way our hypothesis that Greek people mostly prefer Greek meat poultry and fish was completely confirmed.

Consumers' attitudes to frozen meat

The qualitative research implied that people do not react positively towards frozen meat in Greece, for various health reasons or for its characteristics. Ranking the statements referring to frozen meat we can see the following: In Greece, consumers do not prefer frozen meat because they are afraid of the way in which it is preserved, because it does not have vitamins and minerals, it is not nourishing, and it is not recommended by doctors for growing children. Some other people avoid frozen meat consumption, mainly because they are biased against it. However, people on balance disagree that frozen meat is not good for health, is fat and harmful (**table 2**). According to the characteristics of

frozen meat, people do not agree that these are as good as those of fresh meat. They believe that frozen meat is too old, is not tasty, is not as fresh, does not smell pleasant, etc., (**table 3**).

Relation between the characteristics of consumers and attitudes to frozen meat

Table 4 shows that there is relation between the age of the interviewed consumers and some attitudes towards

frozen meat. Regarding "frozen meat is not tasty as fresh meat", as the age of the people rises, the positive agreements go up as well. The statement "frozen meat is harmful" is not believed by a large number of people. As the age of doubtful people goes up, the percentages of their answers drop. Most of the people say that "frozen meat does not look nice". This is mainly believed by people who are older. Younger people stay more doubtful on this question.

Table 2 People's statements on frozen meat relevant to health by the rank of the average scores.

Statement	Average Score
People do not trust frozen meat because they are afraid of the condition of its preservation	3.94
People do not prefer frozen meat because they are biased	3.66
People do not prefer frozen meat without knowing the reasons	3.48
Frozen meat is not good for health	2.98
Frozen meat is fat	2.78
Frozen meat is harmful	2.77
Frozen meat is as good a source of vitamins and minerals as the same kind of fresh meat	2.62
Frozen meat is as nourishing as the same kind of fresh meat	2.52
Doctors recommend more frozen meat rather than less fresh meat for growing children	2.23

Table 3 People's statements on frozen meat relevant to its characteristics, by the rank of the average scores.

Statement	Average Score
People believe that frozen meat is kept for a long time	3.91
Frozen meat is not as tasty as fresh meat	3.85
Most frozen meat is imported	3.75
Frozen meat does not look nice	3.52
Frozen uncooked meat does not smell pleasant	3.45
Frozen meat is not as tender as fresh meat	3.34
The quality of frozen meat is not so good	3.24
First class frozen meat costs almost as much as fresh meat	3.12
People prefer packed frozen meat	3.01
Frozen meat is good value for money	2.93
People prefer frozen cuts straight from the frozen carcass	2.88
People prefer ready cuts of thawed frozen meat	2.76
Frozen meat is as juicy as fresh meat	2.67
Cooked frozen mince is not any different from cooked fresh mince	2.64
The flavour of frozen meat is as good as fresh meat	2.42

Table 4 List of correlates of consumer's socio-economic characteristics and their statements towards frozen meat.

Socio-economic characteristic of the consumers	Statement	Significance
Age	"Frozen meat is not as tasty as fresh meat"	0.0196
	"Frozen meat is harmful"	0.0004
	"Frozen meat does not look nice"	0.0037
	"Frozen uncooked meat does not smell pleasant"	0.0269
	"People believe that frozen meat is kept for a long time"	0.0104
	"Frozen meat is as nourishing as the same kind of fresh meat"	0.0442



To the statement "frozen uncooked meat smells compleasnt", more than half of all age groups of consumers believe that "frozen uncooked meat smells unpleasant". About one third of youngsters disagree, while older people agree or strongly agree with the statement.

People believe that "frozen meat is kept a long time". The majority of the consumers agree or strongly agree with the statement. This is mostly believed by the younger people. At last about the statement "frozen meat is very nourishing as the kind of fresh meat" is not believed by the consumers. Half of the people aged from 26 to 45 years old disagree with the statement. The higher propotion (56 per cent) with no opinion belongs to younger people.

Conclusions

The majority of Greek consumers prefer Greek fresh meat, liver from veal, chicken and fish rather than imported fresh or frozen meat.

The hypothesis relating to frozen meat was supported by the survey. It was found out that Greeks usually have a negative attitude towards frozen meat for health or nutritional reasons, and also about its characteristics. They believe that frozen meat is not as tasty as fresh meat, it is harmful, it does not look nice, it has been kept for a long time, the conditions of its prefervation

are not good etc.

The age of the consumers, as hypothesised, was found to relate to consumers' statement about frozen meat. That frozen meat is not as tasty as fresh meat, is mostly believed by the consumers. As the age of consumers rises, the positive agreements rise as well. Also that "frozen meat is harmful" is not believed by most of the people. That most doubtful people are aged 45 years and under. The attitude that frozen meat does not look nice, is mainly taken by the older people. The younger consumers are doubtful. More than half of the consumers believe that frozen uncooked meat smells unpleasant. This is mostly believed by the older people.

The majority of the consumers believe that frozen meat is kept a long time and especially by the younger. Finally, that frozen meat is as nourising as fresh meat, is not believed by the consumers. Half of the consumers aged from 26 to 45 disagree with this statement. Most of the people with no opinion belong to the younger age groups. ●

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