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Factors Influencing Milk Consumption and Purchase Behavior – Evidence from Slovakia

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Abstract

Current situation on a market characterized by continuous intensifying pressure of globalization, strengthening intensity of competition, introducing wide diversity and range of product offer, increasing pressure and influence of media, rapid booming of new technologies or supporting free flow of information and knowledge has put a consumer into the position of major decisive and leading element of a market. Consumption of dairy products by Slovak consumers is very low compared to other countries in European Union and the world what results in a negative impact on businesses in this sector. One of the main reasons is low demand of consumers. Therefore, it is important to study factors stimulating and influencing consumers when purchasing milk products in order to support their consumption as well as to study factors that prevent consumers in their purchasing and consumption in order to deal with them and eliminate them if possible. The aim of this paper is to analyze influence of selected psychological and personal factors on milk consumption and purchase. We test and reveal their relationships and identify predictors that could be practically used as segmentation criteria by marketing managers in marketing strategy development.

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1. Introduction

After the abolishment of milk quota system, introduced within the European Union that occurred in April 2015 it raised a number of questions concerning the future of the dairy sector, the existence of dairy businesses and the excessive production of milk (EurActiv.sk, 2015; Trend.sk, 2015). Slovakia and also some of other European Union's member countries are therefore reasonably afraid of at least two big threats: intensifying pressure of foreign

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competitive dairy businesses that thanks to globalization have an excellent possibility to export and sell their products outside of home country and strengthening position of retail stores on a market that brought them a unique opportunity to dictate the prices of sold milk. For several years, the dairy sector in Slovakia has faced a number of problems concerning reducing size of dairy herd, lowering amount of milk production, insufficient purchase price of milk and shrinking number of milk producers and processors that have raised as a consequence of declining milk consumption (Národné poľnohospodárske a potravinárske centrum, 2015; Trend.sk, 2015). Milk consumption in Slovakia is also not sufficient with respect to the level of recommended annual intake of milk and milk products consumption set by World Health Organization upon the level of 200 kg per capita (for the comparison, in Slovakia, the annual level of milk and milk products consumption ranges from 160 – 165 kg per capita) and hence it is suitable to ask some important questions: “Why the consumption of milk is so low?” “What factors are “behind”?” “What could be done to support it and how to deal with possible barriers?” (PS:PR, 2014). It is a consumer who ultimately influences the existence and prosperity of a business in the future, hence studying consumer behavior and its influencing factors is interesting for both academicians and practitioners. The main aim of this paper was to examine chosen psychological factors of milk purchase among Slovaks in connection with their personal factors.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Literature Review

In case of milk, we could identify four essential *motives* (reasons or drivers) of milk consumption. The first motive is its nutritional composition. Milk is considered to be one of the most nutritionally complex and balanced foods “containing a wide range of essential nutrients required for growth, development and overall health and wellbeing throughout one’s life cycle” (The National Dairy Council, 2008, p. 65, Gonda, 2009, In Kurajdová, Táborecká-Petrovičová, The Dairy Council, 2014, 2015; Kadison, 2014;). The second is its positive impact on health preservation and various diseases prevention, e.g. the pleasurable impact of milk consumption on the prevention of osteoporosis (Deakin University Australia, 2013), the reduction of blood pressure and the reduction of type 2 diabetes occurrences (The Dairy Council, 2014), the occurrence of breast cancer, colon cancer and rectum cancer (The Dairy Council, 2014; Kajaba et al., 2007), strengthening cognitive behavior (William Reed Business Media SAS, 2013) or improving the quality and texture of skin (Dallmeier, 2012). Last two possible motives that may bring, especially Slovak, consumers to the consumption of milk are mutually interconnected – tradition and utilization. Beginnings of the milk products production and consumption in Europe date back to the middle ages (Mlieko.sk, 2014), where sheep milk was the first kind of milk in Slovakia. Today’s most popular kind of milk is cow milk (accounting for 98 % of Slovak milk consumption) started to be processed and consumed several years later (Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky, 2013). Such a long tradition has left consequences in Slovak culture and especially in Slovak national gastronomy. As an evidence of that could be considered the fact that one of the essential ingredients, from which most of Slovak national meals are prepared, is milk and products made from it (SACR, 2015). In the field of studying and examining *motives* of milk purchase and consumption was realized a number of scientific studies and researches. E. Nagová et al. (1998) revealed that the top stated reasons for purchasing milk by Slovak consumers were taste, healthy life style, habit, product’s availability and its utilization in a household. C. Mannerbo and G. Wallin (2007) examined determinants of a purchase of eco-labeled milk. Based on their research results, perceived taste and attitudes of important people to consumers (i.e. family and friends) were found to be statistically significant motives leading consumers of Stockholm towards a purchase of eco-labeled milk. A. Alwis et al. (2009) did an analysis of factors influencing consumption of fresh milk among consumers of Sri Lanka and revealed that taste and nutritional content have positive (stimulating) impact and conversely health problems, price level and product’s availability have negative (dissimulating) impact on consumer decision to purchase fresh milk. Similar to already mentioned motives came also other authors G. Krešić et al. (2010) who identified taste, health and price as the most important motives for selecting dairy beverages; then S. Santoso et al. (2012) who found health; B. Bonaventure and W. Umberger (2012) nutrition and P. Senadisai et al. (2014) health, proportion between price and quality and knowledge about milk as main motivational factors influencing the purchase behavior of milk. However, there exist also some discouraging factors that conversely create *barriers* to milk consumption and its purchase. Consumers may be influenced by media articles presenting

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