

ANALYSIS OF CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES FOR LOCAL CHEESE IN KOSOVO APPLYING CONJOINT CHOICE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Analyzing consumer preferences for cheese consumption in the market of Kosovo is very important, very complex and also very interesting process to study, as cheese is part of every meal in all Kosovar families. Our goal in this research was to identify the impact of attributes and attribute levels on consumers' preferences when buying and consuming cheese.

The research was conducted in five cities in Kosovo (Pristina, Prizren, Peja, Gjilani, and Mitrovica) with a total of 225 cheese consumers' and we have used the type of questionnaires adapted to face-to-face contact with consumers'. These preferences were analyzed by applying conjoint choice analysis (CCA) and latent class analysis (LCA) methods. These methods (CCA and LCA) enabled us to classify consumers into five groups (classes), depending on the category of cheese they preferred: Origin ("Sharri" cheese, "Rugova" cheese, home-made cheese), price (3 €/kg, 4 €/kg, 5 €/kg, 6 €/kg), type of milk (cow milk, sheep milk, goat milk), type of cheese (soft cheese, medium-soft cheese, hard cheese), taste (white cheese, yellow cheese, cheese with added spices), and the attributes of cheese that have most preferences are shown with the highest level of significance ($P \leq 005$).

Research results have shown that attributes such as type of milk for producing cheese and taste of cheese are very important attributes with a final impact on consumer preferences, although the level of importance of the type of cheese varies according to classes (groups) of consumers depending on the type of milk and taste which have been shown to be important attributes to all consumers classes.

Cheese producers in Kosovo should be oriented in the production of their cheeses according to consumer preferences, adapting to their preferences according to the type of cheese, type of milk for producing cheese, taste and origin of cheese. The research analysis provided us useful information for producers and policymakers on the potential for further development of the cheese industry, for the creation of labels and brands for the type of milk and cheese, with regional indicators on milk content for production and protect the origin of the cheese.

Key words: Cheese, Consumers' preferences, Conjoint choice analysis, Latent class analysis.