

Effect of Age on the Perception of Functional Foods by Residents of Polish

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Abstract. The study attempted to determine the effect of age on the perception of functional foods by Polish consumers. The paper presents results of surveys were conducted in 2012 among Polish respondents, who were chosen using random selection. The study used a method of diagnostic survey. The aim of the study was to investigate the consumption of functional foods, depending on the age of the respondents, specify the types of products consumed and its consumption motives. The opinions of respondents regarding the comparison of the organoleptic attributes and nutritional value of functional foods to conventional food were collected. The results indicate that age influences the type of consumer intake of functional food. Differences also arise concerning the comparison of the nutritional value and organoleptic attributes of functional foods to conventional food. Changing themes consumption of such foods and relate primarily to improve physical condition and improve mood and well-being.

Keywords: functional foods, consumers acceptance, consumption motives

1. Introduction

In the last decades consumer demands in the field of food production has changed considerably. The requirements of modern food market, and consumer preferences relate to elements such as pro-health, health safety, durability and high sensory attributes. Consumers more and more believe that foods contribute directly to their health [1], [2]. Today foods are not intended to only satisfy hunger and to provide necessary nutrients for humans but also to prevent nutrition-related diseases and improve physical and mental well-being of the consumers [3], [4].

The development of functional foods is a multistage process that requires conducting research at various stages of the placing on the market. An important element is the consumer research to establish the factors that determine the acceptance of functional foods. Consumers are increasingly interested in healthy eating and look for products that have a range of action arising from their composition. Learn about new trends in nutrition, such as fitness, fit, light. Food products with health claims attesting to functional capacity to promote health which extends beyond provision of essential nutrients are eagerly accepted by consumers.

Functional food is a new category of products promising health benefits. All foods are functional to a degree, because all products contain the taste, aroma and are rich value [5]. Functional foods may improve the general conditions of the body (e.g. pre- and probiotics), decrease the risk of some diseases (e.g. cholesterol-lowering products), and could even be used for curing some illnesses. It was recognized that there is a demand for these products as different demographical studies revealed that the medical service of the aging population is rather expensive [3], [6], [7]. The increasing demand on such foods can be explained by the increasing cost of healthcare, the steady increase in life expectancy, and the desire of older people for improved quality of their later years [8]. With prevalent poverty and high rates of malnutrition and escalating rates of diet-related diseases in developing countries, growing functional foods markets provide opportunities

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for developing countries through improvements in public health, and for generating employment and income in the development of functional foods and their supply chains [9].

The first country to develop the idea of functional foods and establish regulations for their uses was Japan [10]. Outside Japan, USA and Canada are the most dynamic markets for functional foods because their consumers appear relatively receptive to foods they believe to be functional [11], also because the legislative framework is more favorable than in Europe [12]. In Europe, functional foods sales have increased significantly; Germany, France, United Kingdom and the Netherlands represent the most important countries within the functional foods market [13]. However, many other European markets are experiencing high growth rates, such as the Netherlands and Spain. In addition, the Euromonitor forecasted that sales of functional foods would rise moderately from 2005 to 2009 in the newly emerging markets of Hungary, Poland and Russia [14]. According to research conducted by Euromonitor International, the functional foods market in Poland grew in 2012 by 3% to more than 1.2 billion euros. In addition, its value will increase by 2015 by almost 1.34 billion. Nevertheless, this increase is not satisfactory in comparison with the growth segment of functional products in other European countries. Segment functional foods in Poland are a niche sector of the economy. At the same time, Polish consumers pay more attention to the parameters of a nutritional and health goods purchased.

2. Methodology

The study attempted to determine the effect of age on the perception of functional foods by Polish consumers. The paper presents the results of pilot studies conducted in 2012 among 100 consumers in Poland. The study was randomly selected group of respondents. The study used a method of diagnostic survey, based on a questionnaire survey. The presented results are part of the research carried out among residents of the Polish consumer.

The aim of the study was to investigate the consumption of functional foods, depending on the age of the respondents, specify the types of products consumed and ascertain the reasons for their consumption. Considered opinions on differences in the nutritional value and organoleptic attributes between conventional and functional foods.

3. Results

The results indicated that the majority of the Polish population surveyed consumed functional foods (57%), such products not consumed 12% of respondents. Most of the respondents consume functional foods belonged to the age groups (Fig. 1): 46-55 years (76.9%) and 26-35 years (71.9%).

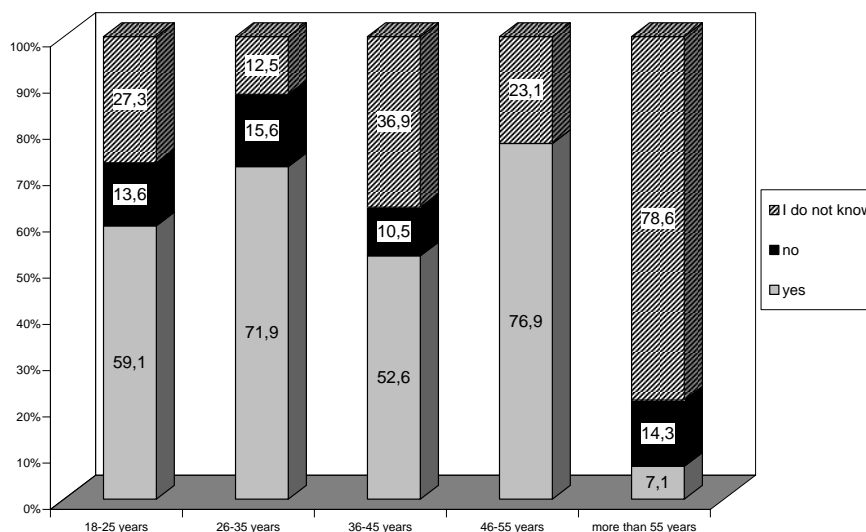


Fig. 1: Consumption of functional foods.

The distribution of responses on types of functional food intake differed depending on the age of the respondents (Table 1). Among younger consumers dominated energizing food (33.3%), in the age 26-35 years, 36-45 years and 46-55 years were dominated by low energy foods. The highest percentage of people over 55 years declared that they do not consume such foods.

Table 1: Type most frequently consumed functional foods.

Types of functional foods	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	more than 55 years
	% of responses				
energizing	33,3	18,8	19,3	7,7	0
dietary special purpose	12,1	7,2	22,8	12,8	11,1
low cholesterol	4,5	7,2	7	15,4	5,6
low sodium	1,5	2,1	5,3	2,6	0
probiotic	15,2	18,8	14	15,4	0
low energy	19,7	27,1	26,3	30,7	11,1
high fiber	13,7	18,8	5,3	15,4	5,6
not consume	0	0	0	0	66,6

With increasing age of respondents was to change the opinion on the comparison of the nutritional functional foods in conventional food (Fig. 2). The youngest respondents, found that functional food has a higher nutritional value, while the oldest in the vast majority (85.8%) were not able to clearly assess.

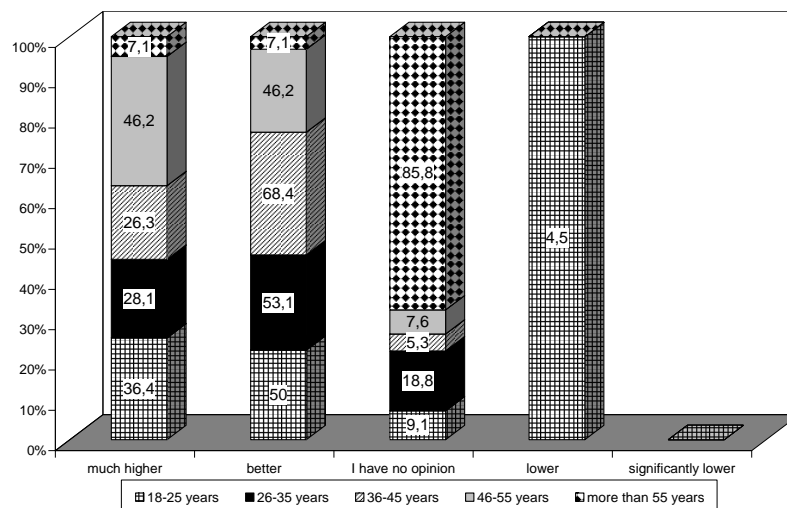


Fig. 2: Comparison of the nutritional value of functional foods to conventional foods.

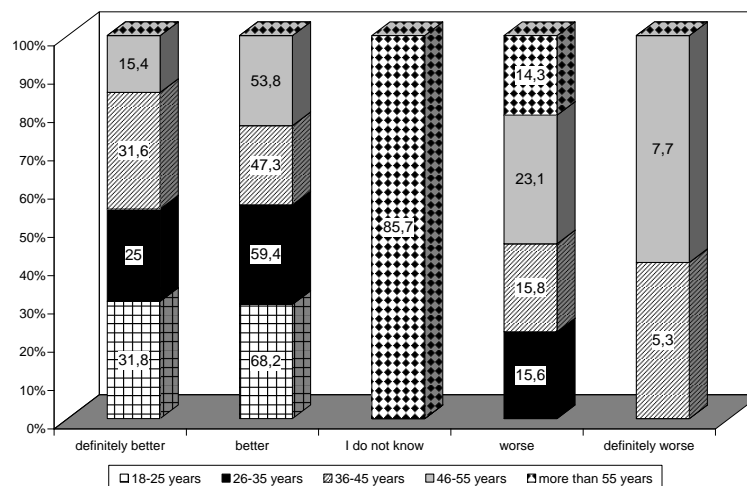


Fig. 3: Comparison of the organoleptic attributes of functional foods to conventional foods.

All respondents to 35 years found, that functional foods have higher organoleptic attributes compared to conventional foods (Fig. 3). The oldest respondents were more critical, most did not give their opinion on the subject, and 14.3% of them specified, that functional foods have lower organoleptic attributes.

Distribution of answers given by respondents of different ages in relation to the factors that determine the acceptance of functional foods are shown in Table 2. Among the factors determining the greatest consumption of functional foods were among the youngest respondents: improving the physical condition (40.9%) and improve mood and well-being (27.3%). The most important for people aged 26-35 years were improvement of the physical condition (21.9%) and the recommendation of a physician (18.8%).

The factors of greatest importance to respondents aged 36-45 years were the improvement of the physical condition (42.1%), and improving mood and well-being (31.5%). For older people the most important factor was the recommendation of a physician (46.1%).

Table 2: Factors determining the acceptance of functional foods.

Indications	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	more than 55 years
	% of responses				
improvement of the physical condition	40,9	21,9	42,1	23,1	0
physician's recommendation	9,1	18,8	21,1	46,1	7,1
improve mood and well-being	27,3	15,6	31,5	23,1	7,1
organoleptic attributes	18,2	25	5,3	7,7	0
advertisement	4,5	15,6	0	0	0
price	0	3,1	0	0	0
not consume	0	0	0	0	85,8

4. Conclusions

Different surveys showed that consumer acceptance of functional foods is far from being unconditional, with one of the main conditions for acceptance pertaining to taste, product quality, price, convenience and trustworthiness of health claims. As a rule, consumers seem to evaluate functional foods first and foremost as foods. Functional benefits may provide added value to consumers but cannot outweigh the sensory properties of foods. By purchasing functional foods is in general consumers may achieve a modern and positive impression of themselves. These products provide consumers a modern way to follow a healthy lifestyle, which differs from the conventionally healthy diet defined by nutrition experts. In general, the attitude both to functional foods and to their consumers is positive, so such a concept represents a sustainable trend in a multi-niche market [15].

On the base of the results it can be concluded that:

There are relationships between age and type of functional food consumption, perceptions of its impact on health and the motives of consuming such foods.

Young consumers most frequently consumed foods energizing, and the elderly - a low-energy food.

Older consumers have a worse opinion on the nutritional and organoleptic qualities of functional foods. This may be a result of lack of knowledge about the properties of an functional foods.

Improved mood and well-being is the greatest motive the intake of functional foods among young consumers. It is associated with the prevailing trend in life - being an all-powerful.

The results indicate the need for nutrition education for consumers. There is a need to inform consumers about the impact of functional foods on the health of consumers. Information activities should be directed not only to people with impaired nutrition, but also to other recipients. We must strive for greater recognition of functional foods among Polish consumers, should be a more recognizable and widely consumed.

5. References

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