

ANALYSIS OF THE BEHAVIOR AND MOTIVATION OF CONSUMERS TOWARDS SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

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Abstract

The paper studies the main Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) in Sibiu County. Data was obtained from local authorities regarding the number of producers selling their products in the markets. In the “Transylvania Market”, their number increased in 5 years from 58 to 180. The SWOT analysis of the Short Food Supply Chains was carried out. In order to evaluate the consumers' attitude regarding SFSC in Sibiu County, an investigation was carried out among 120 consumers. The main advantages and disadvantages of buying local products through SFSC have been identified. The main beliefs of buyers about the products offered by SFSC are: quality, freshness, authenticity, traceability, producer confidence. The main disadvantages identified are unknown quality, low food safety, low supply capacity, long distance, lack of time.

Key words: short food supply chain, attitude, behavior, motivation

INTRODUCTION

On EU level the interest for the short food chain is growing, considering its role in achieving environmental goals. Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) is described like an instrument of sustainable agriculture. [1]

On international level there is an increasing concern for sustainable food distribution. [5,] The Slow Food movement defines SFSC as an alternative strategy that allows producers to regain their active role in the food chain. SFSC focuses on local, decentralized production, which minimizes the number of actors and the distance. [6]

Authors like Peters (2012) say that Short Food Supply Chains reduce the number of intermediates that are needed to deliver the product to the final consumer. [15]

After the distance from the place of production to the point of sale, several SFSC types have been identified on EU level: proximity sales (community-based farming, farm sales, out-of-farm sales to the private or public sector) and distance sales (direct sales to the consumer, on-line sales, sales to specialized retailers).[7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16]

SFSC can be a traditional and/or alternative way of producing, distributing, retailing, and

buying food. SFSC can be served as niches for producers and consumers, who look for alternatives. [9]

The Local Food Initiatives Foundation presents the impact of the local food sector on local sustainable development. Thus, the impact is reflected on human, social, economic, physical and natural capital. [8]

Other studies regarding the behavior of the consumers from Sibiu County showed that SFSC encourages the producers and helps develop a relationship based on trust between producer and buyer. [4, 17]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bibliographic documentation on SFSC and on the theory of planned behavior was carried out. The main types of SFSC in the county were identified. Data was obtained from local public authorities about local producers who sell in markets. The SWOT analysis of SFSC was carried out.

A questionnaire consisting of 9 items was developed and distributed on-line between 01-30 September 2018.

The questionnaire contained 9 items and was completed by 120 respondents. We have centralized, statistically processed and

interpreted the results. The items of the questionnaire refer to: the sex and age of the respondents; residence; the last graduated school; the average family income; number of family members; the person who makes family purchases. The most important reasons or disadvantages related to SFSC have been identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to understand the role of SFSC, their SWOT analysis was carried out [2, 14]

STRONG POINTS

Consumers in the urban area are increasingly moving towards locally produced products.

SFSC offers different traditional foods, obtained locally.

Autonomy is highly related to conventional food chains.

There is collaboration between local producers and buyers in the markets.

Local gourmet supporters have access to personalized services.

Supporting resources and the local economy is the philosophy that unites local producers and end-users.

Transfer of expertise is made easier in local businesses. At the bottom lies the whole family experience over generations.

WEAKNESSES

Seasonality of products obtained locally by traditional methods.

Unsatisfactory product demand for large-scale customers.

Marketing and public relations are limited compared to major global brands.

Less and less labor force in rural areas. Exhaustion of those involved in the business appears.

Production from such businesses is less quantitative.

There is a risk that low-income people can distinguish SFSC as a niche for people with over-average income.

OPPORTUNITIES

Markets or trade fairs are viewed as a marketplace, a special destination where information interacts and is exchanged.

Rural tourism pensions are opportunities to present agri-food products

Caring for the health of animals, but also for protecting the environment and its sustainability is an opportunity. Locally produced products are considered to be sustainable products.

Numerous national and regional strategies are opportunities and support for SFSC development.

School farms can be considered places where young people can see the process of obtaining traditional products. They can be educational means.

Fuel prices have an upward trend globally. They do not significantly affect the prices of products locally produced and marketed through SFSC.

The FEADR program includes a series of funding measures through Local Action Groups (LAGs).

Promoting products and initiatives across various social media sites free of charge.

THREATS

Hypermarket stores develop their own short supply circuits. Local products of clear origin are made available to final consumers.

The purchasing power of end-users may decrease in the event of an economic crisis. Local products are targeted for middle-income and above-average people.

Small and local entrepreneurs are not able to provide tourists with a good quantity and constant quality of products.

The level of information on the various sources of funding and advice is low among the actors involved in SFSC.

Young generation's lack of interest in promoting local products and SFSCs.

Globalization facilitates trade between states.

Climate change (drought, late winter).

Difficult access to land purchase or leasing.

Producers in remote villages in urban areas do not have high-quality telephony and internet access.

Local fake products.

Unfair competition from traders selling "labeled" or "traditional" labeled products. They can be bought from hypermarkets and re-tagged.

Analysis of behavior and consumer's motivation on SFSC

Of the total of 120 responses, 71.29% are female and 28.71% are male. The first observation is that ladies are interested in local products.

The largest number of respondents was between 36 and 55 years old (65.8%), followed by those aged between 26 and 35 (30.6%). People aged 18-25 represent 1.8% and over 55 years old have the same share of 1.8%.

A share of 99.16% of all respondents comes from the urban area, and 0.84% comes from rural areas.

The level of training of the respondents shows that 35% have graduated university (42 persons), 36.67% high school (44 persons), 24.17% (29 persons) are master graduates, 3.33% (4 persons) 10 classes and only 0.83% (1 person) have doctoral studies.

Approx. 38.33% (46 persons) have a net income below 2,000 lei, 36.67% (44 persons) have an income between 2,100 and 3,500 lei, 22.5% (27 persons) between 3,600 and 5,000 lei, and 2.5% (3 persons) over 5,000 lei.

The number of family members varies, one person 35% of respondents (42 persons), 29.17% (35 persons) have 4 family members, 27.5% (33 persons) have 3 members, 6.67% (8 people) have 2 members, and 1.66% (2 persons) have 5 members.

A percentage of 97.5% (117 people) of the surveyed people are engaged in shopping in the family, while only 2.5% (3 people) do not.

The main motivations to buy food through a SFC are: 116 people (96.67%) are convinced that they contribute to local development; 112 people (93.33%) buy for product quality; 111 people (92.5%) buy for the authenticity of the products; 110 people (91.67%) buy for trust in the producer; 95 people (79.17%) buy because the products are traditional; 83 people (69.17%) buy because they are niche products; 76 people (63.33%) buy because they know the products; 66 people (55%) are friends with producers; 61 people (50.83%) buy because the price is convenient; 43 (35.83%) buy for freshness; 40 people (33.33%) buy for traceability of products.

The main reasons why they would not buy through a SFSC are: lack of time for 110 people (91.67%); low supply capacity for 85

people (70.83%); unknown quality for 45 people (37.5%); long distance for 43 people (35.83%); low food safety for 39 people (32.5%) and economically unconventional for 33 people (27.5%).

CONCLUSIONS

Several types of SFSC have been identified in Sibiu County. Consumers in the urban area are increasingly moving towards locally produced products. There is a partnership between producers and consumers. It was created because of trust and transparency.

On Sibiu County level, there are also initiatives to create and support SFSC through consumer associations. Thus, the project of the Association for Supporting Rural Agriculture created partnerships between consumer groups and farmers in the neighboring villages. These initiatives do not benefit from a high rate of success among consumers. Most citizens in Sibiu County have family ties or knowledge in nearby villages that can deliver food from farmhouses.

There is an increased interest in the direct delivery of the products obtained. They are delivered either at the customers' home or at a predetermined destination. There are few initiatives to open a store due to high rents and space planning. Only 3 producers' stores have been identified.

In Sibiu county there are also a number of gastronomic events. [3] During the winter, these are mainly held in the city of Sibiu, and in summer, in villages in the county, home to one of the local producers. Usually they take place once a month, and producers have to turn to other distribution channels.

Our research on the online environment has identified a limited number of facebook pages or websites of local producers. A number of 3 vegetable producers promote their products on the internet, 2 quail producers and 1 traditional bread or pastry producer.

On Hârtibaciu Valley there is an initiative designed to create a brand of the area. The products offered are promoted under the trademark "Din Hârtibaciu, cu drag".[2]

Producers' access to the city's markets is limited due to the high rental prices of the stalls, but also because of the intermediary placement of the stalls.

Transylvania Market is the point of attraction of the producers in the county, but also from the neighboring ones. The number of producers selling on Transylvania Market has increased in the past 5 years since its establishment, from 58 to 180. About 58% of them sell vegetables and fruits, respectively dairy products. The success of this market is due to the free of charge of the stand and its proximity to a neighborhood of flats.

Consumers are encouraged to buy products directly from the producers at a relatively short distance from their home.

Consumers education is an essential point of Transylvania Market organizers. A space was set up to inform about the products in the market. Information is also provided on the values promoted by SFSC, the seasonality of products, the economic and social benefits on local level.

Special attention is placed on gastronomic culture as a local patrimony. Transylvania Market is also a point of attraction for orders placed during the week. The market is also a space for creating long-term relationships between producers and consumers. Producers have been loyal to their clientele, a great deal of which has been bought from the same stand for every week.

Supermarkets also have special stands for local producers. Local producers do not want to participate in the program. They can not deliver large quantities of products throughout the year. A relevant example of a local product sold in a supermarket is raspberry from a farmer in the area.

The main beliefs of buyers about the products offered by SFSC are: quality, freshness, authenticity, traceability, producer confidence. The main disadvantages identified are unknown quality, low food safety, low supply capacity, long distance, lack of time.

It has been observed that the feminine sex is responsible for the purchase of food in the household.

Revenue from people who are interested in local products is around the average economy.

Products marketed through SFSC are products accessible to middle class people.

At the base of the intention to buy local products is the quality of the products.

On Sibiu County level, a great deal of attention is paid to environmental protection and the development of the local economy.

Buyers consider purchasing local products to contribute to environmental protection and local development.

It turns out that SFSC creates links between producers and consumers. There were significant responses that respondents say they are friends with farmers.

Society has become one of the speed in which population is pressed by time, by deadlines. People can not afford to waste a lot of time looking for products. Lack of time is the main disadvantage identified in the intention to buy local products.

Small producers have all the strengths to develop and maintain short food supply chains. They must have the ability to associate.

On country level (Romania), the creation of these short food chains is supported financially by the National Rural Development Program 2014-2020. Local Action Groups have a special role to play in this.

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