

The impact of emotional storytelling on consumers' acceptance and purchasing intention of cheese and hazelnut with Protected Designation of Origin

Kallas Zein, Rahmani Djamel, Morcillo Yolanda, Colomer Delia, Gil, José Maria¹

Abstract – The main purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of the emotional story on the sensory perception of food. The importance of information on the hedonic evaluation and purchase intention of food is demonstrated in the consumer behaviour literature. Our hypothesis is based on the superiority of emotional storytelling compared to the objective message when analysing the sensorial acceptability of PDO and consumers' purchase intention and Willingness to pay (WTP) for PDO. In an experimental economics study carrying out a sensory study and the contingent valuation on 240 consumers in Catalonia (Spain), results showed a strong positive influence on the purchase intention, willingness to pay and sensory acceptance when using an emotional message compared to an objective one. Results could represent a roadmap to improve the promotional messages of the appellations of origin.

Keywords – emotional storytelling, consumers, hedonic evaluation, PDO, cheese, hazelnut.

INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that consumers' hedonic evaluation and purchase intention of food products are affected by external contexts and varying environments. The information plays an important role in the formation of the expected and actual sensory acceptances and in identifying consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) (Baba et al., 2016). In this research, we assess the impact of emotional and objective storytelling using audio-visual and infographic communication materials on the liking scores and WTP of two Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) in Catalonia. The starting hypothesis is the superiority of the emotional discourse versus the objective narrative in affecting consumers' acceptability and preferences. In this context, the main objective of this study is to analyse the impact of emotional storytelling on consumers' preferences and acceptance. Furthermore, to assess how the emotional message positively influences the consumers' sensory perceptions and intentions for two Protected Designation of Origin: The

Hazelnut of Reus and the Cheese of the Alt Urgell and the Cerdanya.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To achieve the main goal, two methodological approaches were followed: The between and the within samples comparisons. The former is based on comparing the impact of the emotional (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEmA6K21rnQ>) and objective storytelling (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWQsps7GJfE&t=49s>) using two communication formats (video and infographic) between two samples that are similar in term of socioeconomic characteristics (gender, age and social class). The second approach aims at comparing the impact of the emotional and objective storytelling within the same sample by randomly presenting participants with the two types of information and communication formats. To reduce the order effect and the sensory interactions between the products (hazelnut and cheese), the presentation of the products and the communication format were randomized.

The Between approach is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980). According to this model, the expectations of the sensory quality of a product are based on the information that the consumer has and his experience with similar products. Thus, when the product is consumed, a real experience of the sensory quality of the product is developed. In this way, it will be possible to analyze whether the expectations and the real experience of the product coincide or not. If expectations are better than actual experience, a positive impact of the information is demonstrated. If expectations are lower, an insufficient impact of information on the creation of sensory perception is demonstrated.

The information presented to the consumers was differentiated in content and format according to the type of PDO product. In terms of content, the impact of information is compared between emotional storytelling and objective message. As for the format of the information, it was differentiated between written (infographics in the case of cheese PDO) and visual (video in the case of hazelnuts PDO). In both

¹Kallas zein, Rahmani Djamel and Gil José Maria are from Centre de Recerca en Economia i Desenvolupament Agroalimentari-CREDA-UPC-IRTA, Castelldefels, Barcelona, Spain. (zein.kallas@upc.edu, rahmani.djamel@upc.edu, chema.gil@upc.edu)
Morcillo, Yolanda and Colomer Delia are from Departament d'Acció Climàtica, Alimentació i Agenda Rural of the Catalan Government (delia.colomer@gencat.cat, vmorcillo@gencat.cat).

cases, the products were compared to the market-leading brand in each case.

Data were obtained during April 2020 from a self-completed structured questionnaire jointly with a hedonic sensory analysis on 240 consumers (Figure 1) A quota sampling approach was used with gender, age and postal districts as stratification variables. Participants were recruited from the metropolitan area of Barcelona province, that are exclusively or mainly responsible of household food shopping and who have consumed hazelnuts and cheese at least once in the last two months. Additionally, consumers were economically compensated for their participation.

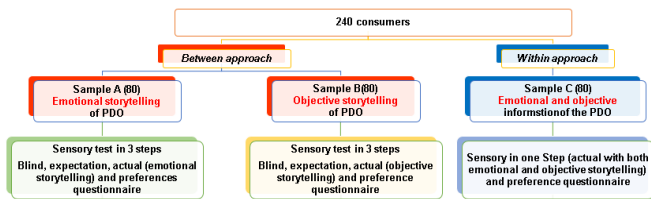


Figure 1. The methodological approach

To minimize the sensory interactions between the product (Hazelnut PDO) and the product (Cheese PDO), the presentation of the products was random to minimize the impact of the order on the results. Each session consisted of 20 consumers and lasted 1 hour. Consumers. The experiment took place over 2 days. There were 6 sessions each day (3 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon).

RESULTS

Results showed that the type of message used to inform consumers of the origin of the product plays an important role in determining the final consumers' acceptance (liking) and preferences (willingness to pay). These results are in line with what consumers' literature showed (Kallas et al., 2019). However, this result was not statistically significant in the approach between samples (while showing a clear trend of the superiority of emotional message compared to objective one). In contrast, the results of the within-sample approach showed that the PDOs promoted with an emotional message were more accepted and preferred compared to the PDO promoted only with objective information as can be seen in Figure 1 on the hedonic 9 points Likert-scale of liking. Furthermore, this result was also similar to consumers' purchase intention and Willingness to Pay (WTP) for the PDO where results showed a significant WTP a premium for PDO promoted through emotional storytelling.

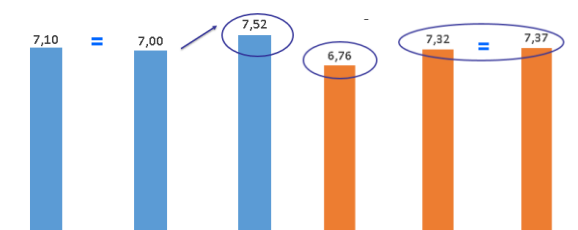


Figure 2. The emotional storytelling impact on PDO liking

Results showed that consumers aged 40-59 years rated the PDO promoted with the emotional storytelling as better flavour compared to consumers aged between 18 and 39 years. Furthermore, unipersonal households compared to those with 4 members or more rated the PDO with emotional video as better flavour. Similar results were also found for consumers

with Secondary studies compared to consumers with university studies and for individuals who are responsible of homework compared to the Self-employed and Students participants.

CONCLUSIONS

Results showed that including emotional storytelling of the PDO using an Audio-visual format compared to infographic format and when presented with objective information could improve the sensory perceptions of the PDO and allow for differentiating the PDO from other competing products. Furthermore, consumers' purchase intention and their WTP significantly increased with emotional storytelling. Our results could represent a roadmap to improve the promotional messages of the appellations of origin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project receives funding from the Departament d'Acció Climàtica, Alimentació i Agenda Rural of the Catalan Government (Spain).

REFERENCES

- Baba, Y., Kallas, Z., Costa-Font, M., Gil, J. M., & Realini, C. E. (2016). Impact of hedonic evaluation on consumers' preferences for beef attributes including its enrichment with n-3 and CLA fatty acids. *Meat science*, 111, 9-17.
- Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17, 46-49.
- Kallas, Z., Varela, E., Čandek-Potokar, M., Pugliese, C., Cerjak, M., Tomažin, U., ... & Gil, J. M. (2019). Can innovations in traditional pork products help thriving EU untapped pig breeds? A non-hypothetical discrete choice experiment with hedonic evaluation. *Meat science*, 154, 75-85.