

Valuation of fresh produce at Local Markets – consumer’s perspectives

Joana Filipa Sampaio¹; Luís Miguel Cunha^{2,4}; Ana Pinto de Moura^{2,4}; Ada Rocha^{1,4}.

¹Faculdade de Ciências da Nutrição e Alimentação da UP; ²Faculdade de Ciências da UP; ³Universidade Aberta; ⁴Laboratório Associado REQUIMTE.

Introduction: There has been an increasing consumer’s interest on fresh products from a local origin, even when prices are higher. To preserve consumer’s trust and confidence and to enlarge this consumer segment it is essential that producers and retailers know and recognize the fresh produce quality indicators valued by consumers at these points of purchase.

Objectives: To identify the major benefits and barriers associated to fresh produce at Traditional Food Markets.

Material and Methods: Based on focus groups discussion and on preliminary studies made by the research team, the questionnaire was designed. Questionnaires were applied between November and December 2010 to regular and non-regular users of five Traditional Food Markets in the North of Portugal (Bolhão, Bonsucesso, Matosinhos, Mercado da Foz and Braga). A convenience sample of approximately 230 respondents was used.

Results: The majority of respondents were female and living in households with three persons (33 %). The products more frequently bought at Traditional Food Markets were fruit (87 %) and vegetables (68 %). A greater agreement of respondents was found towards sentences referring to a more restrained shopping basket when shopping at Traditional Food Markets, freshness and origin of products sold there. The disagreement was more noticeable on sentences related to food safety and hygiene at food markets. It was found a greater degree of agreement on sentences related to quality of hygiene and cleaning. The major discrepancy was found about the origin and familiarity of produce sold at traditional Food Markets.

Conclusions: A predominance of women shopping at food markets was confirmed nevertheless presence of younger shoppers was also identified. It is important to notice the perception that shopping at Traditional Food Markets are perceived as more controlled by the shopper than the ones at supermarkets, showing less tendency to buy by impulse in traditional shopping places. This aspect is of great relevance for food market operators indicating the possibility of developing strategies to allow consumers to feel more comfortable at the Food Market and possibly shopping larger quantities. Some of the changes valued by consumers are the parking facilities and the improvement of sanitary and hygienic conditions. The results from this study may contribute to different stakeholders focus their communication in a more efficient way aiming to attract more clients to the Traditional Food Markets.

Acknowledgments: authors acknowledge financial support given by University of Porto and Santander through: “Projectos Iniciação à investigação 2009”