



Local, National and Imported Products in Food Consumption

Osman GÜLDEMİR^a

^aAnadolu Üniversitesi, Eskişehir Meslek Yüksekokulu, Aşçılık Programı, Eskişehir/Türkiye (osmanguldemir@gmail.com)

Extensive Summary

Introduction

Foods are the behaviors, thoughts and symbols; therefore, it is at the center of intercultural studies (Zampollo et al., 2011, p. 1). Individuals' thoughts, perceptions, and transfers on food; it affects the consumption behavior of themselves and their environment (Wang, 2011). Along with the differentiation of lifestyle, people's consumption behaviors and preferences also change. Such differentiations are quite common especially in food consumption and demand. (Gündüz and Emir, 2010, p. 16). According to demographic features, food consumption researches are quite high. However, compared to this; studies on local, national and imported food consumption are not sufficient (Akpınar and Yurdakul, 2008; Azabağaoğlu and Dursun, 2008; Yılmaz et al., 2009; Whitney and Rolfes, 2011).

There are different definitions for “*local food*” in various studies and local perception of “*foods produced within the boundaries of the region*” is more common (Dunne, 2010, p. 46, 47; Mount, 2012, p. 107). In this sense, food produced in 80 km radius from the place where individuals live is called “*local food*” (such as Harmancık tomato) (Chambers et al., 2007, p. 210). “*National food*” is defined as the foods produced within the borders of the country (such as beans) and “*imported foods*” are the foods obtained from abroad (Fumey and Etcheverria, 2007, p. 6).

Methodology

As one of the vital practices, food (such as culinary culture, food variety and policies) is known to be one of the main cultural components to explain national identity and nationalism. In this context, the purpose of the research; to investigate consumer perceptions and behaviors in terms of local, national and imported foods. Whether the socio-economic situation affects local food consumption or not, whether consumers are willing to pay special foods or not, and

whether their national feelings are effective in their orientation towards imported foods are sub-questions of the study. The sample was formed with a total of 18 people, six academicians, six civil servants and six general employees, determined by the socio-economic stratification method. Nine of them are women and nine of them are men. The first group of individuals in the study is in the low, the second in the middle and the third in the high-income group who voluntarily participated. The ages of individuals vary between 26 and 48; 10 of them are married and eight are single. Three separate focus group interviews were held with these people. During the interviews, the participants were seated in a circle in a way that they could be comfortable. A coffee table, snacks and voice recorders are placed on the table below the individuals' waist, so as not to interrupt communication. The researcher sat a little behind the circle but in such a way that he could make eye contact with the participants. The research assistant, who draws the flow of speech, is seated outside the circle. Before the interviews, participants were asked about gender, age, occupation, marital status and place of residence. In order to provide common understanding; the purpose of the research, privacy assurance and local, national and imported food concepts were briefly explained to the participants. It was stated that the voice recordings would be taken and the participants' approvals were taken both verbally and in writing.

Content analysis was conducted on six themes related to local, national and imported foods. These are cost, lifestyle, food quality, choice, consumer nationalism and farmers.

Results

The results of this research, which aims to research consumer opinions on local, national and imported foods, are as follows;

- In line with the general opinion that consumers exhibit positive behavior towards affordable and quality products; The participants stated that they made price and quality comparisons and that they purchased economical and quality products.
- In relation to Pavlov's classical conditioning theory, it was determined that most of the participants bought products with brand-product "reactive conditioning". They stated that the products of the trusted brand or manufacturer were undoubtedly consumed. In addition, it is understood that they consume organic foods with a health motivation. They had yoghurt at home in the clash of docking; It is understood to those who know that it is included in genetically modified foods, with the motive of avoidance-conflict, they consume corn because it is delicious. Their desire to consume local products and

their being obliged to buy from supermarkets due to lack of time can also be explained by the avoidance-avoidance motivation.

- Participants desire to consume organic, local and delicious products. However, as Marshall states in his economic model, purchasing decisions are based on economy. Consequently, most of the time, participants buy affordable foods. In addition, they emphasize whether they agree by not consuming the B brand and establish a relationship with their selves. Emphasizing that the brand A is natural without additives is a reason for preference of the participants because it establishes a nostalgic relationship between that milk and the person. Some participants show that they have mutual dependencies by stating that they consume the same product frequently.
- Particularly, the participants living in rural areas state that they cannot find everything and have difficulties in accessing various foods. As stated by Veblen in his social-spiritual model, human needs and consumption are shaped by the groups they are in. As a matter of fact, the participants who stated this also demand different things from the needs of the society they live in.

When the evaluation is made in three focus groups; Participants prefer local and national foods more than imported foods. Also, the participants have the perception that local foods are tastier and much fresher. However, they declare that imported foods can be preferred if they are cheaper. Imported foods are also preferred for foods that are believed to be more deliciously grown abroad.

Studies can be made for more affordable, accessible local products, and food politics. Training programs in order to increase the awareness level of individuals; Local food sub-topics may also be included within nutrition issues. Local food sales can be increased in the markets. Consumers can be offered a reliable and accessible local food opportunity.