

CONSUMERS' KNOWLEDGE OF PRODUCTS WITH GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS IN SERBIA

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Abstract. *The main purpose of this study is to shed light on consumers' knowledge of geographical indications in Serbia. We therefore present the results obtained from a consumer survey on a sample of 806 respondents in the territory of Serbia. Differences in consumers' knowledge of geographical indications as well as in the self-perceived level of knowledge of GI food were tested according to several socio-demographic criteria. The results showed that there are significant statistical differences in gender, age, and level of education regarding consumer knowledge of GIs. In addition, the respondents indicated a low level of knowledge about the GIs, qualities, benefits, and method of production of these products, as well as the existence of an adequate control system. As consumers consider themselves insufficiently informed, this finding suggests that it is necessary to undertake actions that will contribute to the consumers' education and information. Based on the obtained results, recommendations useful for marketing managers, decision-makers, agricultural producers as well as future research are given in the paper.*

Key words: *geographical indications, consumers' knowledge, food marketing*

JEL Classification: M31, Q13

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of marketing traditional and geographically labeled products has gained importance due to the increasing consumers' desire to consume high-quality food, preserve the cultural and historical heritage and support the local economy (Caputo et al., 2018). From the consumer's point of view, this growing demand for local and regional food can be seen as a counter-trend against the globalization of industrially

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produced food trade (Teuber, 2011). The generated growing demand is reflected in an increasing number of products registered in accordance with EU Regulation no. 510/2006 and efforts at the national and international level to encourage product protection either as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

In order to preserve diversity, authenticity, and local identity, regional products have been supported by European protection since 1992 (EU Regulation 2081/92, EU Regulation 1151/2012). Geographical indications reflect the link between the product and the territory, preventing misleading or imitation of the registered name and ensuring consumers that the product is authentic (Török et al., 2022) and has the quality inherent to the origin. GIs have been recognized as a tool to encourage rural development, supporting localized agri-food systems and family farming in the context of globalized food markets (Van Caenegem & Cleary, 2017). Geographical indications can increase producer incomes and contribute to local economic development, but the extent to which they do so depends on the nature of consumer demand. Additionally, the information provided by labels gives consumers the opportunity to make an informed choice if they are familiar with the meaning of the label itself (Hartman et al., 2019). Thus, geographical indications have become one of the most commonly used tools for product valorization with limited geographical origin (Vandecandelare, et al., 2009), as well as strengthening the commercialization and promotion of domestic agricultural and food products.

European consumers largely support the principles on which GIs are based. This is supported by the information that more than half of EU citizens choose food that originates from the appropriate geographical area and that has a special label that guarantees the product quality (European Commission, 2020). Today, the sales value of these products has achieved 74.8 billion euros (Török et al., 2018).

The provision of new production alternatives in the economic development in rural areas of Serbia is of particular importance. In Serbia, in areas that are not suitable for industrial development, but are open to the improvement of agriculture, increasing the production of traditional food represents a good opportunity for the local economy. The production of traditional products by small enterprises without extensive technology has been shown to be extremely effective in promoting sustainable agriculture and responding to consumers' growing interest in healthy natural food products (Lambarraa-Lehnhardt et al., 2021).

Consumer knowledge about food products is an important determinant of choice in the purchasing process. Knowledge of geographical indications is considered one of the drivers for consumers to engage in the intended behavior (Mitić & Gligorijević, 2015). When it comes to special categories of products, such as food with geographical indications, consumers will not buy them if they consider them to be of poor quality or unsafe for health (Sääksjärvi et al., 2009). Consumers can only be expected to purchase GI food over conventional ones if they have awareness and knowledge about these products and believe that the specific characteristics justify the higher prices. Without specific knowledge, a consumer is likely to buy food only occasionally, which reflects random fluctuations in his buying behavior rather than a consistent food preference (Sääksjärvi et al., 2009). A relatively low level of knowledge and acceptance of geographically labeled products among consumers represents a special market challenge. Therefore, the preferences and knowledge of consumers according to established labels are decisive components in determining the success of these products on the market (Lambarraa-Lehnhardt et al., 2021).

In the case of labeled products, previous research has shown that consumers have unclear and inadequate knowledge about their definition and characteristics, although an

increasing number of these products are available to consumers (Sääksjärvi et al., 2009). Also, research has shown that Greek consumers have inadequate knowledge about the labels of certified products, which affects their intention to purchase them (Fotopoulos & Kristallis, 2001). Additionally, EU certification labels are the main motive in the purchasing process for Italian consumers with excellent knowledge, according to Vecchio and Annunziata (2011), whereas consumers with insufficient knowledge base their decisions on the product's low price and attractive appearance. According to the research of Wilson (2002), Italian, Greek and French respondents are more familiar with the system of designations of geographical origin compared to respondents in Northern European countries. Consumers from Northern European countries have less knowledge about the protection of traditional regional food products and are less interested in specific product attributes related to the local environment and origin.

The aim of this research is to determine the perceived knowledge of consumers regarding geographical origin labels in order to consider the possibilities of creating appropriate channels of marketing communications and increasing the offer of these products on the market. Furthermore, the aim is to provide a better understanding of consumer knowledge regarding the existence of significant differences between the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The research is of great importance for agriculture producers and managers in order to identify what consumers know about food with GIs and how to identify customers who have different predispositions to purchase this group of products. Given that no empirical research has been conducted to examine the relationship between the multidimensional construct of consumer knowledge of origin-labeled products and labeling systems and other important constructs in marketing, this study aims to fill in this gap in the literature by specifying the extent of consumer knowledge of geographically labeled food.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Products with geographical indications in Serbia

In Serbia, the protection of the geographical origin of agricultural and food products is regulated by law, and a unique database of products and registered producers has been defined. The procedure for labeling products and obtaining legal protection is defined by the Law on the Indications of Geographical Origin (Official Gazette RS, no. 18/2010; 44/2018). This Law is harmonized with the Lisbon Agreement on the Protection of Names of Origin, to a large extent with EU regulations, GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), WTO (World Trade Organization), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) standards and requirements of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their member states, on the one hand, and the Republic of Serbia, on the other hand. The Law on the Indications of Geographical Origin regulates the method of acquiring and protecting the rights of the label, the protection procedure and the procedure for registering the mark of geographical origin, the method of acquiring the status of an authorized user of labels, the content, and scope of the rights of the authorized user, as well as termination of the status of the authorized user of the mark. According to the official definition of the Intellectual Property Office, the designation of geographical origin combines two similar terms: protected designation of origin and geographical indication. The label of traditional specialty guaranteed is not regulated by this Law, so a registration of this type of label is not even possible at the national level.

The protected designation of origin refers to agricultural and food products that are produced, processed, and prepared entirely in a certain geographical area, a certain place or country, whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively attributed to a certain geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors (ZIS, 2022). On the other hand, a protected geographical indication describes agricultural and food products closely related to the territory of a certain country, region, or locality from that territory, where certain quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product can essentially be attributed to its geographical origin (ZIS, 2022). According to the European Commission, designations of geographical origin contribute to the sustainable use of local resources, the protection of natural and social heritage, tradition, and culture, the stabilization of living standards, the regeneration of villages, the increase of income of local producers, the development of gastro tourism and rural diversity (European Commission, 2020).

In our country, the acquisition of intellectual property rights is carried out in interaction with the competent institutions for protection and certification, namely the Institute for Intellectual Property and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as institutions at the local level that use labels as a tool to encourage rural development. In addition, the Rulebook on the form and content of the designation of geographical origin, as well as on the method of controlling the labeling of agricultural and food products with the designation of geographical origin ("Official Gazette RS", no. 92/2012; 19/2013) defined the form and content of two types of control stamp, ensuring that agricultural and food products with GIs are recognizable on the market. Products marked with a control stamp are subject to official control carried out in accordance with the Law regulating food safety. Control stamps are a guarantee to consumers that the product originates from a certain area and has a specific quality or characteristics associated with the geographical origin.

2.2. Awareness of geographical indications in Serbia

The Republic of Serbia has a great variety of traditional and autochthonous products, but there is a small number of registered and protected products at the national level. According to the data of the Institute for Intellectual Property in the Republic of Serbia, 79 products are currently protected, of which 53 products have a protected designation of origin, and 26 products have a protected geographical indication (ZIS, 2022). During the last decade, there has been an increasing demand for traditional and handmade products, strictly linked to their geographical origin, and distinguished by specific characteristics making them worthy of protection and differentiating them from similar products created in the industrial process of production (Aquilanti et al., 2013). Autochthonous products in Serbia have a great reputation among consumers due to their geographical and climatic factors, local production practices, as well as cultural and historical heritage. The current state of the domestic market for products with GIs is characterized by rather difficult development with slow tendencies due to the lack of organizational structure in production, promotional activities, and the selection of appropriate channels of marketing communications. In order to increase the consumption of these products, it is necessary to highlight the importance of labels in terms of local community development, the income of small producers, contribution to the rural economy, and overall sustainable development.

Scare studies (Giraud et al., 2013) on consumer preferences in the territory of the Western Balkans indicate that the majority of consumers from these territories do not share preferences of their colleagues in Western countries directing their preferences to industrial products sold

in supermarkets. Although according to Alboi and Voicilas (2014), consumers in Serbia have a positive attitude towards the production and commercialization of traditional food products, only a small percentage of the population values traditionally produced food. Due to insufficient promotion of GI products and lack of knowledge (Pinna et al., 2017), the consumers' ability to identify traditional and locally produced food is very weak (Filipović, 2019). On the other hand, from the consumer's point of view, the question arises of the readiness of the domestic market to use this market potential, as well as whether, despite motivation to consume these products, there is the purchasing power of the population that can realize higher consumption.

A literature review (Stojanović & Barjolle, 2012; Likoudis et al., 2015; Vecchio & Annunziata, 2015) found that the socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, income, education level and household size) of respondents influence the perception of consumer knowledge as well as higher consumption of these products. Therefore, previous studies have shown that gender influences the behavior of purchasing GI products. The results of the research by Stojanović and Barjolla (2012) and Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei, (2013) point out that members of the male gender are more inclined to consume traditional food. On the other hand, women tend to be more open and interested in information about GI foods (Vecchio & Annunziata, 2015). Women are more attached to labeled products because such products give them a guarantee of verified quality and safety (Skubic et al., 2018). Such outcomes may result from the fact that women purchase groceries and food products for their families before men. As a result, the hypothesis was defined as follows:

H₁: There are statistically significant differences between gender and respondents' knowledge about products with a geographical indication

The age of the respondents is a statistically significant characteristic for consumers regarding products with GIs (Goudis & Skuras, 2020). According to research by Fotopoulos and Krystallis (2003), older and highly educated consumers, as well as those with high incomes, have a greater preference for these products. Regarding knowledge of PDO/PGI labels, the most knowledgeable age group of respondents belongs to the group between 25-50 years old (Wilson, 2002). Additionally, Velčovská (2018) points out that the recognition of at least one label is slightly higher among younger respondents who belong to the 15-39 age group. On the other hand, the research of Stojanović and Barjolle (2012) confirms the existence of a significant statistical difference in the age of respondents according to the consumption of traditional food, and that this group of consumers includes respondents who are slightly less than 50 years old. As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₂: There are statistically significant differences between age and respondents' knowledge about products with a geographical indication

Households with higher incomes tend to buy more products with GI products, which is confirmed by the research of Fotopoulos and Krystallis (2003) who found that Greek consumers with higher incomes prefer quality schemes in the case of buying cheese, ham, and honey. This study supports the findings of Stojanović et al. (2013), who points out that consumers with a higher level of income purchase more GI products. However, given that GI foods are more expensive than conventional food products, it would seem likely that higher-income consumers would be more knowledgeable about traditional food products since they are able to purchase them with fewer financial barriers than low-income consumers. As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₃: There are statistically significant differences between income and respondents' knowledge about products with a geographical indication

Education is another socio-demographic characteristic of consumers that is considered important when purchasing products with GIs. Previous research has shown that socio-economic groups with a higher level of education scored better knowledge about nutrition and traditional products compared to socio-economic groups with a lower level of education (Bogue et al., 2005). The importance of education as a consumer characteristic also indicated that highly educated respondents tend to buy locally produced food (Skubic et al., 2018). Previous research is confirmed by the research of Sanchez-Villegas et al., (2003) confirming a statistically significant connection between a higher level of education and higher consumption of these products. In accordance with the above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₄: There are statistically significant differences between education and respondents' knowledge about products with a geographical indication

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample

The research was conducted in the period from the beginning of April to the beginning of June 2021 based on a structured questionnaire. The research used a convenient (quota) sample of selected respondents across the country. Based on the administrative division of Serbia into 4 regions, and based on the data of the Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia on the number of adult citizens the required sample size within each region was defined. The data was collected through an online questionnaire and distributed to respondents via social networks (Facebook groups and LinkedIn) directly on e-mail or by personal interviewing of selected respondents. Questionnaires were distributed to adult respondents using the snowball sampling method; respondents were given a questionnaire along with a cover letter asking them to forward it to their friends and family members of various demographic profiles. A total of 806 valid and complete fulfilled questionnaires were collected.

By analyzing the sample, it was determined that 315 (39.1%) male persons, 486 (60.3%) female persons and 6 (0.6%) persons who did not want to identify themselves participated in the research. The majority of respondents (36.8%) belong to the age category between 25 and 44 years old, while regarding the level of education, the highest percentage of respondents has a secondary vocational education, that is, completed a four-year high school (44.7% of respondents). The majority of respondents earn monthly income between 90,001 and 120,000 RSD (20.1%) (table 1).

3.2. Research instrument

In the research, a structured online questionnaire was used as an instrument. The questionnaire covered a large number of questions, among which the following were singled out for the purposes of this research: respondents' perceptions regarding the determination, characteristics and advantages of geographical origin designations and perceived consumer knowledge about the labeling system, the method of production of products with designation of origin and the existence of a certification body responsible for the control process of these products. The scales for measuring consumer knowledge about products with a geographical origin label were defined on the basis of scales from previous research in this area. Respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with regard to perceived knowledge using a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree").

Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables		%	SV*	SD*
<i>Gender</i>	Female	60.3	1.615	-
	Male	39.1		
	I can't identify myself	0.6		
<i>Age</i>	18-24	10.3	3.628	1.599
	25-44	36.8		
	45-64	35.3		
	> 65	17.6		
<i>Level of education</i>	Unfinished elementary school	1.1	4.476	1.053
	Completed elementary school	4.2		
	Completed high school	44.7		
	Completed high school or college	33.5		
	Completed master's or doctoral studies	16.5		
<i>Income (RSD)</i>	< 30000	8.2	3.832	1.599
	From 30001 to 50000	17.7		
	From 50001 to 70000	15.8		
	From 70001 to 90000	18.7		
	From 90001 to 120000	20.1		
	> 120001	19.5		

n=806; *SV=Mean value; SD=Standard Deviation

Source: Authors' calculation

Additionally, respondents were asked to assess their level of familiarity with the designation of geographical origin (measured by the question: In your opinion, are you familiar with the concept of designation of geographical origin?). Additionally, the socio-demographic features that are important for this research are gender, age, level of education, and monthly income of the respondents.

3.3. Data processing

In the data analysis, descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used in order to test the difference in consumer knowledge according to labels on food products according to socio-demographic features. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS WITH DISCUSSION

Consumer awareness of products with GIs is an important antecedent of food products knowledge. It is necessary to examine whether consumers are aware of the labels of origin and whether they understand their meaning. In the first phase of the research, the familiarity of consumers with products with a geographical origin label was examined, i.e. the percentage of potential and existing consumers who were aware of the existence of this label. It was found that the majority of the respondents (85.1%) has developed awareness and are familiar with the concept of designation of origin, which is considered a very good indicator in comparison with previous research in this area.

Although it has been established that consumers are aware of labeling, the next step is to determine consumers' actual knowledge of label meaning, certification, and labeling procedures.

Table 2 presents the results regarding the characteristics of labels that consumers consider important and the extent to which these labels in the domestic market fulfill those characteristics. According to the respondents, the guarantee of the region of origin is the most important feature of the geographical indication (SV=3.84), while the statement that products with GIs have more nutritional value than other products received the lowest average score (SV=2.55). The expressed views on the labels' validity and benefits were evaluated differently. Respondents are uncertain whether products with a label of origin contain more nutrients than conventional foods, but the guarantee of origin and place of production is highly ranked and can be considered a significant characteristic when purchasing these products with added value.

Table 2 Distribution of general consumer perceptions of the importance of GI characteristics

Characteristics and meaning of the GIs	SV	SD	Frequency (%)				
			1	2	3	4	5
The label is an indication of a more expensive product	2.76	1.298	21.2	22.1	28.5	15.3	12.9
The label guarantees compliance with regulations and standards	3.57	1.245	6.9	14.1	24.2	24.6	30.1
The label has a clear logo, easy to recognize	3.57	1.181	6.5	11.5	27.4	28.2	26.4
The label indicates the attractiveness of the product	3.26	1.232	10.9	14.6	30.6	25.1	18.7
The label is part of the producers marketing activity	3.72	1.183	5.3	11.0	22.5	28.3	32.9
The label is self-explanatory	3.59	1.134	5.3	10.5	29.7	28.9	25.6
The label is a guarantee of product quality	3.43	1.300	10.5	13.9	24.4	24.4	26.7
The label is a guarantee of tradition and production methods	3.61	1.277	8.6	11.8	21.5	26.1	32.1
The label is a guarantee of the region of origin	3.84	1.256	6.1	10.9	18.7	21.3	42.9
The label is a guarantee of the place of production	3.79	1.243	6.6	10.3	19.2	24.9	39.0
The label is an indicator of reliability	3.43	1.248	8.8	14.3	26.3	25.8	24.8
Labeled products have more nutrients	2.55	1.298	27.4	24.2	25.4	12.3	10.7
Labeled products are better looking	2.74	1.292	22.2	21.7	28.2	16.1	11.8

N=806; 1-I completely disagree; 5-I completely agree;
 SV=Mean value; SD=Standard Deviation; Kronbah $\alpha=0,905$
 Source: Authors' calculation

In addition to consumer attitudes toward the characteristics of GI products, respondents were asked to rate their level of knowledge about the labeling system. In terms of knowledge self-assessment about the method of food production, their quality and the possibility of recognition, the analysis of the answers has shown a low level of respondents' knowledge (table 3). Respondents completely or partially disagree (63.5%) that they have the skills and knowledge about the production method, the benefits of these products (60.3%), the quality (58.1%), and the ability to distinguish products from geographical origin of organic and other products (55.2 %).

Table 3 Distribution of respondents' knowledge responses

	SV	SD	Frequency (%)				
			1	2	3	4	5
I consider myself to have enough knowledge about the production methods of products with GIs	2.11	1.1381	38.6	27.9	21.8	6.9	4.7
I consider myself to have sufficient knowledge about the benefits of GI products	2.28	1.1782	32.8	27.5	23.4	11.2	5.1
I consider myself to have sufficient knowledge about the qualities of GI products	2.31	1.1886	32.8	25.6	25.4	10.8	5.5
I consider that I can distinguish GI products from organic and traditional ones	2.44	1.2856	31.4	23.8	22.8	13.5	8.4

N =806; 1-I completely disagree; 5-I completely agree;
 SV=Mean value; SD=Standard Deviation; Kronbah $\alpha=0,932$
 Source: Authors' calculation

Control and certification of products with GIs are crucial to consumer trust in the protection system, given that they guarantee control and confirmation of quality by competent institutions. Respondents were asked about the existence of a special certification body for the certification and control of labeling processes and labeled products. The interpretation of the results indicates that consumers have a low level of knowledge, as more than half of the respondents (55.1 percent) responded that it is not certain that our country has a special regulatory body responsible for the implementation of control and certification of products with GIs. Another group of respondents recognize the existence of the control system, but consider they do not have sufficient knowledge of how these institutions function (37.6 percent), while only 3.7 percent stated that they were informed about the competencies and activities of the control and certification authorities. A small percentage (3.6 percent) of all respondents believe that competent authorities, as well as the labeling control and certification system, do not exist.

The research hypotheses were then tested, specifically the presence of statistical significance between the selected socio-demographic characteristics and consumers' perceived knowledge of the quality, benefits, and production method of the labeled products. Based on the F-test, gender ($p \leq 0.05$), age ($p \leq 0.01$) and education ($p \leq 0.01$) had a statistically significant influence on consumer knowledge (table 4).

Table 4 ANOVA at the 95% significance level for consumer knowledge of products with GIs

Variables	Type III sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	The middle of the square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Model	74.855 ^a	17	4.403	3.914	.000	.078
	148.260	1	148.260	131.773	.000	.143
Gender	8.727	2	4.364	3.878	.021	.010
Age	29.027	5	5.805	5.160	.000	.032
Education	30.347	5	6.069	5.394	.000	.033
Income	6.815	5	1.363	1.211	.302	.008
Error	886.592	788	1.125			
Total	5169.938	806				
Corrected Total	961.447	805				

Source: Authors' calculation

As the previous table shows, there are significant differences in the knowledge of male, female consumers and those who can not identify themselves regarding labels on food products, supporting hypothesis H₁. Based on the LSD test, it was determined that males have statistically more knowledge and are better informed about the method of production and preparation of products with GIs and their quality ($p \leq 0.05$) compared to females and those who can not identify themselves. Furthermore, age, as a selected characteristic of the respondents, has a positive influence on consumer knowledge about products with GIs, supporting hypothesis H₂. Older consumers in the 55-64 age category have more knowledge about products with a label of origin compared to younger consumers. More precisely, younger consumers who belong to the age categories of 18-24 and 25-34 years, have less knowledge about products GIs compared to other age groups. A significant statistical difference was identified between the level of education of the respondents and the level of knowledge, supporting hypothesis H₃. The results of the LSD test show that respondents who have completed high school or college have more positive attitudes and more knowledge than respondents who have not completed primary school, but also than those who have completed secondary school. Additionally, respondents with completed primary school have a statistically higher level of knowledge of the marking system compared to the group of respondents with incomplete primary school. Monthly income had no statistically significant effect, indicating that there are no differences in income and perceived consumer knowledge, thus rejecting hypothesis H₄.

The obtained results suggest that consumers have difficulties in recognizing and identifying the characteristics and quality of products that are in the system of geographical indications, as well as the benefits that these products provide. The identified lack of knowledge is due to a lack of information and/or its unavailability to consumers.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Profiling consumers with a desire to consume food with an origin label can be the first step toward increasing consumption. Product knowledge and trust are regarded as the most important marketing factors influencing consumer behavior because they reduce complexity and uncertainty when making a purchase decision. The research provided insight into the level of perceived consumer knowledge about the characteristics of the geographical origin designation, the method of production, the labeling system and the existence of a certification body. According to the findings of the study, consumers have relatively little knowledge of geographical indications, but they are aware of their existence. If consumers do not understand what the labels represent and the quality of these products, the label cannot assist them in making an informed decision.

The knowledge gap shown by consumers is increased by the difficulty in defining the link between labels and products: the consumer is not able to identify products with a geographical indication and those without. Furthermore, undeveloped product certification and labeling schemes contribute to a lack of market knowledge of these products.

The obtained results confirm the importance of defining appropriate actions and strategies for the rationalization of methods of conveying information about product quality marks and marking processes. The recommendation to policymakers is to envisage effective interventions aimed at guaranteeing an adequate transfer of information to the final consumers and to develop campaigns to educate them on the differences between food

products with and without GIs and other characteristics. It is essential that the schemes and standards are transparent enough to allow consumers to understand what they are purchasing, while also simplifying and understanding all information so that they are confident of the benefits they receive for the appropriate quality.

From a managerial perspective, gaining insight into consumer knowledge about traditional foods allows companies to achieve better market segmentation. Given the existence of differences in socio-demographic characteristics, targeting consumers with a high level of knowledge ensures a positive response to promotional offers. The research can also help food producers to identify their target consumers and to provide appropriate information in order to increase their knowledge, and consequently the demand in the market. What is certainly positive for agricultural producers is the fact that the majority of consumers expressed positive views that geographical indications are a guarantee of the region of origin and the place of production. Therefore, the producers' primary aim should be to educate consumers and present their products, i.e. their benefits and distinctive characteristics. The greater consumer preferences are recognized, the higher the benefits for small local manufacturers.

The major findings given in this work have various limitations that should be considered before conducting further research. One of the limitations of the research is the lack of influence of perceived knowledge on the intended behavior of consumers, therefore future research should be focused in this direction. In further research, it is necessary to look at the statistically significant influence between the mentioned socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the actual purchase of products with GIs. Another idea is to analyze the differences between defined characteristics and consumer knowledge about traditional food compared to conventional food. Therefore, this research is necessary as a first and more comprehensive step towards synthesizing the attention of researchers to the importance of food labeling problems and the need for further focus on this group of products.

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PERCEPCIJA ZNANJA POTROŠAČA O PROIZVODIMA SA OZNAKOM GEOGRAFSKOG POREKLA U SRBIJI

Cilj istraživanja jeste analiza percipiranog znanja potrošača o oznakama geografskog porekla u Srbiji. U tu svrhu, prezentovani su rezultati istraživanja spovedenog na uzorku od 806 ispitanika na teritoriji Srbije. Statistička analiza obuhvatila je analizu percipiranog znanja o proizvodima sa oznakom geografskog porekla kao i testiranje razlika u znanju ispitanika prema oznakama na hrani, uzevši u obzir socio-demografska obeležja. Rezultati su ukazali da postoje značajne statističke razlike pola, godina starosti i nivoa obrazovanja u pogledu znanja potrošača o oznakama porekla. Dodatno, ispitanici su pokazali nizak nivo znanja o oznakama geografskog porekla, kvalitetu, koristima i načinu proizvodnje ovih proizvoda, kao i postojanju adekvatnog sistema kontrole i sertifikacije. Kako potrošači sebe smatraju nedovoljno informisanim ovakav nalaz sugerise da je potrebno preduzeti akcije koje će doprineti edukaciji i informisanju potrošača. Na osnovu dobijenih rezultata, u radu su date preporuke korisne za marketing menadžere, donosiocima odluka, poljoprivredne proizvođače kao i buduća istraživanja.

Ključne reči: oznake geografskog porekla, znanje potrošača, marketing prehrambenih proizvoda