

Chapter 10

Marketing Strategies for Trendy Animal Products: Sustainability as a Core

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing pressure on companies to follow more strict practices along the whole supply chain regarding sustainability and health. However, consumers' knowledge on nutrition, labelling and on the impacts of the agri-food system is scarce. In this sense, it is particularly interesting to analyse consumers' behaviour towards a family of products coming from one of the most controversial sectors due to both past health hazards and its high environmental impact: the livestock sector. This sector constitutes itself one of the Global issues' bottlenecks that call for urgent action. The present study reviews consumers' behaviour towards meat and dairy products claiming different attributes related to sustainability. Therefore, this chapter reviews, synthesizes and discusses the existing knowledge on the topic with an integrative-interdisciplinary approach. Finally, marketing strategy recommendations are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Public's opinion and advertising are increasingly internalizing sustainability attributes (health included) as not only desirable ones but also as companies' musts regarding CSR. Due to this, there is increasing pressure on companies to follow more strict practices along the whole supply chain. However, research shows scarce level of consumers' knowledge of agricultural, manufacturing and marketing practices (i.e. regulations and standards), as well as their consequences on the agri-food system sustainability. In this sense, it is particularly interesting to analyse consumers' behaviour towards a family of products coming from one of the most controversial and sometimes negatively sectors due to both not forgotten past health hazards and its high environmental impact: the livestock sector.

There is increasing pressure from stakeholders around the social and environmental responsibilities of companies, including how products are sourced and manufactured, and marketed to consumers. This

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poses a challenge for stakeholders in terms of understanding and incorporate sustainability in their every day practices (Oates, Alevizou, & McDonald, 2016).

In line with this contextualization, the present chapter is aimed at: (a) reviewing and synthesizing consumers' behaviour towards products of animal origin claiming different sustainability attributes; (b) discussing on the interplay among: (i) the need to feed a global growing population, while reducing live-stock sector's environmental impact and; (ii) the lack of knowledge and response from consumers towards more sustainable animal products; (c) providing with marketing strategies to align the abovementioned interplay, in order to feed the global growing population by means of more sustainable agri-food chains and products (market support/approval).

CONSUMPTION TRENDS

After the great process of industrialization and urbanization of societies during the 20th century, the food security approach lead the industry to focus on producing larger amounts of food at affordable prices. Nowadays, the predictions in growth of global population led to again work on this approach. However, this now must be also compatible with stricter consumers' demands, especially in the areas of health (nutrition), animal welfare and convenience. Consumers themselves are faced with a bewildering range of product choices and increasing information, which raises questions about links between sustainability in production and consumption. The main aspects will be discussed. In order to continue being competitive and sustainable, the meat industry must continually respond to consumer and market-lead quality ques (Troy & Kerry, 2010).

Food Safety

Food safety is an essential pillar of social sustainability, and as a leading cause of foodborne illnesses, meat products have received special attention from consumers, stakeholders and policy makers. Consumers feel that consumers are not satisfied that the current food system is adequately attending to threats (providing sufficient protection from) of foodborne contamination (Tobin, Thomson, & LaBorde, 2012).

Particularly, cattle and beef markets have suffered from these safety concerns mainly as a consequence of the discovery of cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The impact of this issue was so important that some countries have lost their access to key markets (such as North America into the Japanese market) (Schroeder, Tonsor, Mintert, & Pennings, 2007).

From the industry and producers' perspective, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of consumer produce safety perceptions and preferences, in order to make better-informed decisions regarding their food safety practices. In this sense, Tobin et al. (2012) studied how consumer demographics, along with their preferences for specific attributes in fresh produce, such as local, organic and inspected for food safety (GAP), affect their produce safety perceptions. These authors found that consumers perceive that produce inspected for GAPs offers enhanced safety. In this sense, O'Donovan and McCarthy (2002) found that increasing awareness of food safety and pollution issues are important determinants in the purchase of organic meat.

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