

WP6: Consumer Motivations and Behaviours for Products with Health Claims

Introduction

Market of products with N&H claims was initiated during mid 1990's – first in dairy sector and than in other sectors already present in developed countries. The market development of such products in WBC was not followed by significant scientific interest.

The same research methodology has been applied in Western Balkans countries (WBC), namely Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and FYR Macedonia. Hence, the results we present are highly comparable in six countries of the region.

Research Methodology

The research methodology applied in the study is based on a multi-technique (a number of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques was used) and multi-stakeholder approach (a number of different stakeholders were interviewed). Different families of N&H products have been covered by this study, i.e. milk and nectars enriched with vitamins and minerals, dietetic jam, light margarine and yoghurt with probiotics.

In total, 29 out of 45 identified producers and 26 retailers present in all WBC were interviewed. Additionally, seven EU exporters of studied categories of products regionally present in WBC were interviewed. The overall respondent rate in WBC was 71%. If we look at the number of observations, the analysis was based on the totally 120 different brands/products. The detailed structure of respondents is provided in the following table:

Table 1. Structure of in depth interviews in WBC

Criteria	Structure	No of interviews
Category of products with N&H claim	Jam for persons suffering from diabetes	15
	Yoghurts with probiotics	25
	Milk enriched with vitamins and minerals	17
	"Light margarine" with reduced fat content	28
	Juice enriched with vitamins and minerals	21
Stakeholder	Other products	14
	Processor	38
	Retailer	26
	Expert	18
Country	Bosnia and Herzegovina	14
	Croatia	9
	EU	7
	Macedonia	11
	Montenegro	11
	Slovenia	10

Examples of effective health claims

Research shows that X% of women in Serbia suffers from osteoporosis. Doctors recommend additional Calcium intake from early years of age.

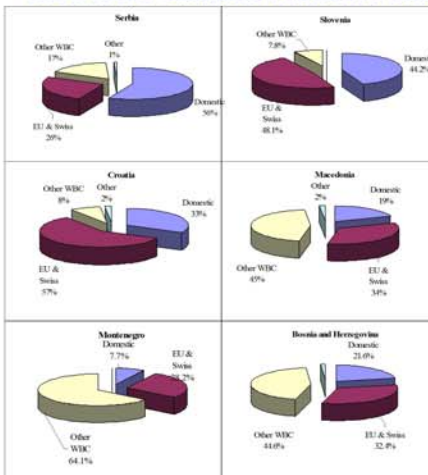
Nutritional research shows that in average daily intake of Serbian citizens there are X times less fiber compared to recommended daily intake. Doctors recommend additional intake of fiber to all target groups, regardless of sex and age.



Graph 4. What is an effective health claim, according to consumers?

Findings and Elaboration

WBC N&H Claimed Products Market - Current State and Perspectives



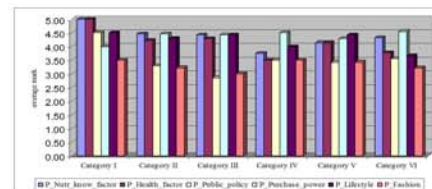
Graph 2. Structure of brands of N&H products in WBC by origin

Nutritional knowledge, awareness of food intake and promotion of healthy life style are key factors of change that could influence future consumption of nutrition and health claimed products.

Table 2. WBC N&H products market characteristics

Country	Regulated	Domestic producers	Market share	Consuming class	Market Position	Barriers	Field of health claims
Slovenia	Yes	EU	Higher	High	Market Position	Information	3
Croatia	Yes	EU	Average	High	Consumers	Regulative	2
Serbia	No	SRB	Average	High	Image	Lack of scientific support	5
Macedonia	No	WBC	Lower	High	Consumers	Lack of scientific support	4
B&H	No	WBC	Lower	High	Profit	Finance	3
Montenegro	No	WBC	Lower	High	Consumers Image	Finance	2

Market share of studied categories of products is higher in Slovenia (EU trends or producers influence) - and lower in Montenegro, Bosnia and Macedonia, while Serbia and Croatia represent an average of the WBC market. However, market growth for these products is high in all countries.



Graph 3. The main factors of WBC N&H market change in the future

FGDs Results

Typical consumer of food with health claims is well situated and informed, urban female. However, according to mothers the typical consumers are 50+ population with health problem. On contrary, 50+ participants perceive them young, fancy and attractive females.

Table 3. Typical consumer of health claim products

	Older examines	Joint characteristics	Mothers
	Major opinion	Female	Major opinion
Sex		Female	60
Age	20-30		
Appearance	Trendy, attractive	In a good shape, well groomed	
Employment	Working		Still working, private company
Education		High	
Income		Average to high	
Household		4 members (2 children)	
Hobby	Skiing, sailing, all that fancy stuff		Taking care of children
House		Cozy but not too expensive	
Personality		Friendly, extroverted	
Where they buy		Supermarkets	
When they buy		On the weekly bases	
Why they buy	She wants to try new products, to look good, to loose weight		For health impact
When they eat it		On everyday bases	

Special attention has to be paid to health claims, since they should convey relevant information to consumers that would otherwise remain unknown. Communication can have a great impact on changing consumers' knowledge and attitudes and reshaping their decision-making processes. This is particularly true if the market is emerging, the product is made of novel ingredients or its health benefit is not widely known.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF FUNCTIONAL FOOD

Consumers view this type of food as

- Innovative (it is associated with new, trendy and modern)
- Scientific (it is based on scientific medical research)
- Beneficial for health (it is expected for it to improve specific health problems or be beneficial for overall health status).

BARRIERS FOR FUNCTIONAL FOOD PURCHASE AND CONSUMPTION

- Consumers are **not informed** enough to identify functional food and to recognize its potential health benefit
- There is a **high level of distrust** in these products, expressed in two ways: doubt in the effects that are stated in the claim (this is more specific for WBC markets with higher functional food share) and/or doubt in the fact that those ingredients are really added or added in the stated amount (this is more specific for moderately developed and less regulated WBC markets)
- Consumers perceive functional food to be **targeting small specific groups** (older, chronically ill or with uncommon or specific health problem).

AN EFFECTIVE HEALTH CLAIM SHOULD BE:

- Understandable** to the consumers
 - simple
 - not overly scientific
- Convincing**
 - officially confirmed by established institution or regulatory body
- Relevant**
 - consumers should feel targeted by the product.

Conclusion

Two scenarios of WBC N&H products market development can be identified:

- The first scenario** - N&H products pass through fashion product life-cycle. Targeted population is covered by young, educated, high income, urban women as the main consumers. However, in developed WBC N&H markets (Slovenian and Croatian market) targeted population is even now extended to mothers who are seen as households' gate keepers.
- The second scenario** - along with innovators and early adopters (young active women and mothers), elderly population with higher and middle income also became interested consumer group for products with N&H claims at WBC. The athletes and businessmen are seen as new consumers.

The market is going through transition - from young to the elderly population, the higher income class to middle class layers, from women to men.

Active public policy in the field of research can promote the concept of healthy lifestyle and healthy eating in the region. The highly regulated market of products with N&H claims can be used as an efficient channel for information dissemination to the general public. Health and risk-diseases diet related information could be efficiently promoted to the general public by N&H claimed products.

