

The approach to assessing the characteristics significant for consumers when buying meat and meat products of organic origin

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Abstract. The effect of the "healthy food" trend, which has recently been the basis of food choice among consumers, has significantly transformed approaches to buying, in particular the selection and evaluation of meat and meat products. No less serious changes have occurred in the model of the purchase decision-making process, which in turn encourages manufacturers to develop positioning, production, and sale of products at a new qualitative level relative to all market vectors, one of which is the formation of the organic food market segment. Nevertheless, despite the significant transformation of the market, at the moment the segments for a number of product categories have not been finally formed. At the moment, the existing number of criteria that are the basis of choice does not always indicate the organic origin of the product, in particular, one of such criteria is the category "farm products", often these two concepts are interchangeable in the consumer's mind. This article attempts to evaluate the main factors and criteria for choosing meat and meat products belonging to the "organic products" class based on understanding the transformation of ideas about the process of making a decision to purchase a product, considering the formation of the "healthy food" trend. Based on the results of the study, the main vectors of the development of the marketing relationship model with the consumer are determined, the interrelation of a number of factors indicating the organic origin of the product for the consumer is formulated. The key criteria for positioning meat and meat products of organic origin have been identified. The main conclusions regarding the characteristics that are significant for the consumer when buying meat and meat products of organic origin are formulated.

1 Introduction

The development of global trends regarding the overall improvement of the life quality, attitude to health and healthy nutrition is a trend of the last decade. Particular attention is paid to these issues in Russia by consumers living in large megacities and cities, where the lifestyle and rhythm of life encourages the formation of new habits, including transforming

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the approach to food selection. Producers, in turn, developing communication with the consumer, strive to highlight their products by pointing to various indicators evaluated in the consumer's mind as factors confirming the organic origin of the product, in particular: regional origin, farm products, free-range of animals, "premium" quality of the product, etc. [1-3].

At the moment, there is a law on organic products in Russia since 2020, this document is based on the principle of production based on the rejection of the use of chemicals, antibiotics, hormones, etc. in the production of products, and the production itself should be based on traditional technologies. Thus, there is a legislative basis for the production of environmentally friendly products. Nevertheless, there are a number of constraining factors to the growth of this segment, which should include: insufficient state support for the transition of organizations to the production of organic products, high retail prices for the product, falsifications, low consumer demand for these products due to the lack of consumer confidence in such products.

Thus, it seems significant to conduct a marketing research regarding the understanding of the choice of meat and meat products of organic origin, to form a model of marketing relations with the consumer based on sustainable trust in the choice of organic products.

2 Current state of the problem

At the moment, the prospects for the development of the meat subcomplex of Russia are based on global trends, which in turn significantly affects the range of products offered and increases its competitiveness in foreign markets. The segment of organic products, in particular meat and meat products, is at the stage of development and its share of the total volume of products sold is no more than 3.5%. Nevertheless, it is the significant growth of this sector that makes it possible to ensure the socio-economic security and food security of local communities, contributes to the restoration of ecological and food systems [2-5].

Analyzing the research conducted on this topic, we note a serious transformation in the consumer's understanding of a number of factors affecting the decision-making process on buying food, in particular, such factors should include the effect of external and internal factors that form the constants of consumer behavior in relation to food [4-8]. The analysis of the results of these studies revealed the key factors affecting the choice of meat and meat products of organic origin, presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The main factors affecting consumer behavior when choosing meat and meat products

Criteria for the selection of meat and meat products	Selection factors
Factors formed on the basis of eating behavior	
Factors of "healthy lifestyle" perception	Health benefits, product safety
Related directly to the product	Product quality
Cultural	Traditions, religion, culture, product preparation recipe
Factors formed due to the effect of the external environment	
Subjective	Manufacturer's popularity, brand popularity
Location	Geographical, regional affiliation, political

It should be noted that at the moment there is no information in the literature about the conducted marketing studies of formed consumer preferences in the segment of meat and meat products of organic origin in the conditions of a significant transformation of the market under study.

3 Materials and Methods

Thus, the main purpose of the research is to identify and determine the significance of the main characteristics of the choice of meat and meat products of organic origin by consumers, as well as their transformation in a changing environment. The basis of the approach to evaluating the proposed characteristics was the method of conducting marketing research in the format of an in-depth interview. The survey was based on the concept proposed by the sociologist K. Levin [3], used in marketing research to determine the factors of product choice that are significant for the consumer in relation to the model of the purchase decision-making process.

The marketing research was conducted in November 2022, in Moscow, in supermarkets positioning their activities in the "healthy food" segment and the "premium" segment. To analyze the object under study, 163 interview results were selected. All respondents regularly buy food products, including meat and meat products in the stores under study, as well as independently make a purchase decision. The evaluation of the obtained results was carried out on the basis of the analysis used in conducting qualitative research methods, which in turn allows to compare the opinions obtained with the significant criteria of the selected sample.

4 Results

The formed sample, during the analysis of the results obtained, included respondents of the following age groups: aged 35 to 45 years – 31%; 46-55 years – 42%. About 13% were persons belonging to the age category of 56-66 years, 12% of respondents belonged to the age category from 25 to 34 years, the rest of the respondents were persons younger than 24 years.

Differentiation by gender showed the following results: the decision to buy food is mainly made by women – 74% of the respondents. Additional differentiation by the level of education of the sample under study allowed to obtain the following results: most of the respondents who took part in the study have a higher education – about 54% of the respondents and about 8.4% have an academic degree. About 25.6% have secondary vocational education, and about 10.7% of the respondents have secondary education, supplemented by various professional development courses. It should be noted that among the selected interview results there were respondents who did not answer this question – about 1.3% of the respondents.

The majority of respondents participating in the marketing research live in families of 3 people – 37%, and families of 2 people - 25%. About 22% live in families, the composition of which is equal to 4 people. 12% of the respondents live independently, and the rest of the respondents live in families of 5 or more people.

Analysis of the sample data allowed to differentiate buyers into 5 classes according to the level of commensurate income per family member. Thus, about 4.5% have an income less than 20 thousand rubles, from 21-45 thousand rubles – 32%, from 46-65 thousand rubles - 44.7%, from 66-90 thousand rubles - 4.5%. The rest of the respondents had an income of more than 90 thousand rubles per family member. It should be noted that some of the persons,

which is about 11% of the persons participating in the interview, refused to give information about their income level.

The majority of respondents, about 72%, are working people, of which about 46% of respondents are people who carry out their professional activities in managerial positions. About 26% of respondents surveyed are housewives. There were also persons who did not answer this question about 2% of the respondents.

During the interview, respondents were free to speak about the proposed factors affecting consumer behavior. The conversation was based on the presentation of the concept of making a decision on the purchase of meat and meat products, with the aim of considering as much as possible all factors affecting consumer behavior, considering their possible transformation.

Analyzing the answers, it should be noted that the majority of respondents compare meat of organic origin with the premium quality of the product, which, in their opinion, is interrelated with the price of meat and meat products. The survey also found that for more than half of respondents, about 51%, the concept of organic products and farm products are equivalent. For 21%, the idea of the existing aspects of the production of organic products fully comply with the requirements considered in the legislation. It should be noted that for 17% of respondents, farm products are products produced in small volumes at family enterprises that guarantee high quality of the product, while organic products do not fully disclose the conditions of product manufacture, which in turn raises doubts among consumers about the high quality of the product.

The distribution of responses regarding the priority of the factors of choice of meat and meat products of organic origin formed on the basis of the accepted eating behavior of respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents' answers regarding the formed factors of choosing meat and meat products based on their eating behavior

Criteria for the selection of meat and meat products	Distribution of respondents' answers (out of 157 interview results)
Factors of healthy lifestyle perception	
Health benefits	157
Production factors: (animal keeping conditions, production conditions)	132
Product safety	93

Thus, analyzing the results obtained, a serious relationship has been established between the factors of healthy lifestyle perception, the price of the product, and the idea of premium quality of the product. The main criterion characterizing this factor was the criterion of "health benefits". According to the majority of respondents, meat and meat products as a product that is the main source of protein should bring maximum health benefits, while most of the respondents agreed that the basis of the diet should be meat varieties with the lowest fat content. In particular, the differentiation according to the type of meat preferred for consumption is as follows: about 48% of respondents believe that the use of meat of various types of poultry brings the highest health benefits, about 22% of consumers believe that the basis of the diet should be veal and beef meat, 11% preferred pork meat, emphasizing the importance of choosing dietary types of meat, the rest of the respondents prefer other types of meat.

According to the majority of respondents, production factors are the basis for the production of organic as well as farm products. Thus, high-quality organic products can be only if the conditions of keeping animals fully meet the necessary requirements. Basically, the discussion on this topic was supported by women living in families of 3 or more people.

During the discussion, such significant aspects as: free-range of animals, keeping animals in large and clean rooms, animal health, refusal to use antibiotics and growth hormones were established. A significant aspect is also the possibility of access to information about the content of animals provided, for example, by means of Internet communication through cameras installed in production premises or the organization by the manufacturer of excursions to his farms. About 15% of the persons participating in the discussion of this group of factors noted the importance of the absence of stress during the slaughter of animals, and consider it necessary to take this aspect into account, for example, to locate slaughterhouses in close proximity to farms.

93 respondents considered such a factor as product safety as significant for themselves, while it should be noted that respondents considered this criterion as the main condition for a quality product, which should be a product of organic origin. Respondents consider it significant to have an official confirmation regarding the safety of the product, which should be simple and understandable from the consumer's point of view and presented in the form of an additional sign or symbol.

The second group of factors identified by respondents during the discussion of the purchase decision-making process were factors directly formed under the influence of changes in the external environment presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents' answers regarding the formed factors of choosing meat and meat products based on the external environment effect

Criteria for the selection of meat and meat products	Distribution of respondents' answers (out of 120 interview results)
Factors formed due to the effect of the external environment	
Manufacturer, brand popularity	104
Geographical location, regional affiliation	82
Assortment presented on the market	80

For the majority of respondents, the discussion of this group of factors began with aspects of the formed public opinion about the importance of distinguishing the concepts of farm and organic products in the consumer's mind. This discussion became the basis for the formation of the proposed group of factors. The main criterion for choosing, in their opinion, is trust in the manufacturer, who must prove to the consumer the quality of his products and develop communication with the consumer through the brand. When communicating, about 48 respondents noted that it is the trust in the brand of organic products that is more significant, which should distinguish products on the market and serve as a guarantee of quality, which is currently not on the market.

About 82 respondents identified regional affiliation as a significant aspect, in their opinion, first of all, the remoteness of such industries from large megacities is significant, namely, the distance should be at least 100-200 km. During the discussion, interest was also shown in meat products made according to traditional recipes of various regions. For 34 respondents, this fact was associated with their direct experience, in particular, visiting regions and getting acquainted with the cuisine of different nationalities. No less significant was such a factor as the range of products offered. According to 80 respondents, it is insufficient. During the discussion, it was found that almost all respondents considered it significant to offer a larger alternative in the deep-processed meat products segment. In their opinion, due to serious changes in relations with foreign countries, the import of organic

products in a number of segments, including the studied one, has significantly decreased. For the majority of respondents, the product range should be expanded in supermarkets, and preferably with the possibility of pre-tasting the product, since the high cost is a significant deterrent to trying new products without first tasting them. It should also be noted that during the discussion of the range of products offered, consumers focused their attention on the types of products previously presented by foreign manufacturers.

Respondents were inclined to the need for the development of organic production of meat and meat products in Russia, as well as the creation of new information channels popularizing these products.

5 Discussion

The obtained results of the study devoted to the assessment of significant characteristics when buying meat and meat products of organic origin allowed to formulate the following conclusions.

- At the moment, according to consumers, there is no formed segment of organic products, and the concept is interchangeable with the concept of farm products. A serious distrust of this segment of products should also be noted due to the lack of confidence in the high quality and origin of the purchased product.

- Assessing the process of making a purchase decision, consumers identified a group of factors of "healthy lifestyle" perception as fundamental in decision-making. According to the majority of respondents, such a criterion as health benefits is crucial when choosing products of organic origin. It should also be noted the respondents' emphasis on the types of meat that, according to the consumer, have the greatest health benefits, namely: poultry meat and veal or beef meat. Production factors were also a serious selection criterion, which, according to the majority of respondents, must comply with all legislative norms of production. According to respondents, a recognizable symbol or brand should be used to confirm the quality of the product in relation to legal requirements, which will make it easy to identify products on the counter. Particular attention was paid to the conditions of animal rearing in the survey, in particular, when describing such productions, respondents emphasized the need for openness of information, in particular the possibility of visiting farms or observing animals through webcams installed in the production facilities, in their opinion, the openness of production processes will serve as an additional guarantee of high quality of the product produced.

- The second most important group of factors identified by the respondents were factors directly formed under the influence of changes in the external environment, where for the majority of respondents, the discussion of this group of factors began with a conversation about the importance of distinguishing the concepts of farm and organic products in the consumer's mind, and this state of affairs is possible due to the formation of public opinion, the creation of recognizable attributes easily identifying organic products on the counter. The majority of respondents also have serious hopes for an increase in supply in this segment of products, primarily due to the expansion of the range of deep-processed meat products. In their opinion, the basis of communication regarding the development of demand for organic products should be product tastings, allowing the respondent to assess the taste characteristics of meat products.

Thus, as a result of the conducted marketing research, the need for the development of this market segment has been established, in particular, the formation of an image of organic products in the consumer's mind and thereby drawing a boundary between such concepts as farm and organic products. It is also significant to increase the range of products offered in accordance with consumer preferences and considering the development of the "healthy food" trend. The basis of consumer confidence in organic products should be a brand that is

easily recognizable on the counter and identifies the products. This approach, in our opinion, will change the existing distrust of consumers in the segment under study and will allow to develop a model of marketing relations with the consumer.

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