



EXCELLENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Consumer attitudes, perceptions and expectation towards sensory characteristics of organic food

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Biofach Nurnberg, Feb. 16th 2011



Background & rationale of the study

- › Europe takes leading position in organic food and drinks market (51.1 % share of global revenues) (Sahota 2010)
- › Dynamic market development
- › Growing importance of sensory aspects for product positioning and marketing strategies
- › Sensory aspects may serve as an important buying motive or barrier (Zanoli et al. 2004, Oughton and Ritson 2007)



“full and bodied”



“light and fruity”

Objectives

The objectives of the qualitative consumer research in the project EU-Ecropolis was

- › **To explore consumer attitudes, experiences and expectations of sensory of organic food**
- › **To investigate the concept of consumers' sensory perception of organic food compared to conventional food**
- › **To explore sensory marketing opportunities of organic products**

Methodology

- › **Qualitative method: Focus groups**
- › **Based on guideline with key questions**
- › **4-5 focus groups per country: 28 focus groups in total**
- › **6-10 consumers per group**
- › **Two target groups**
 - › **Heavy users of organic food: frequent consumption of organic food**
 - › **Light users of organic food: occasional consumption of organic food**



Methods and research design

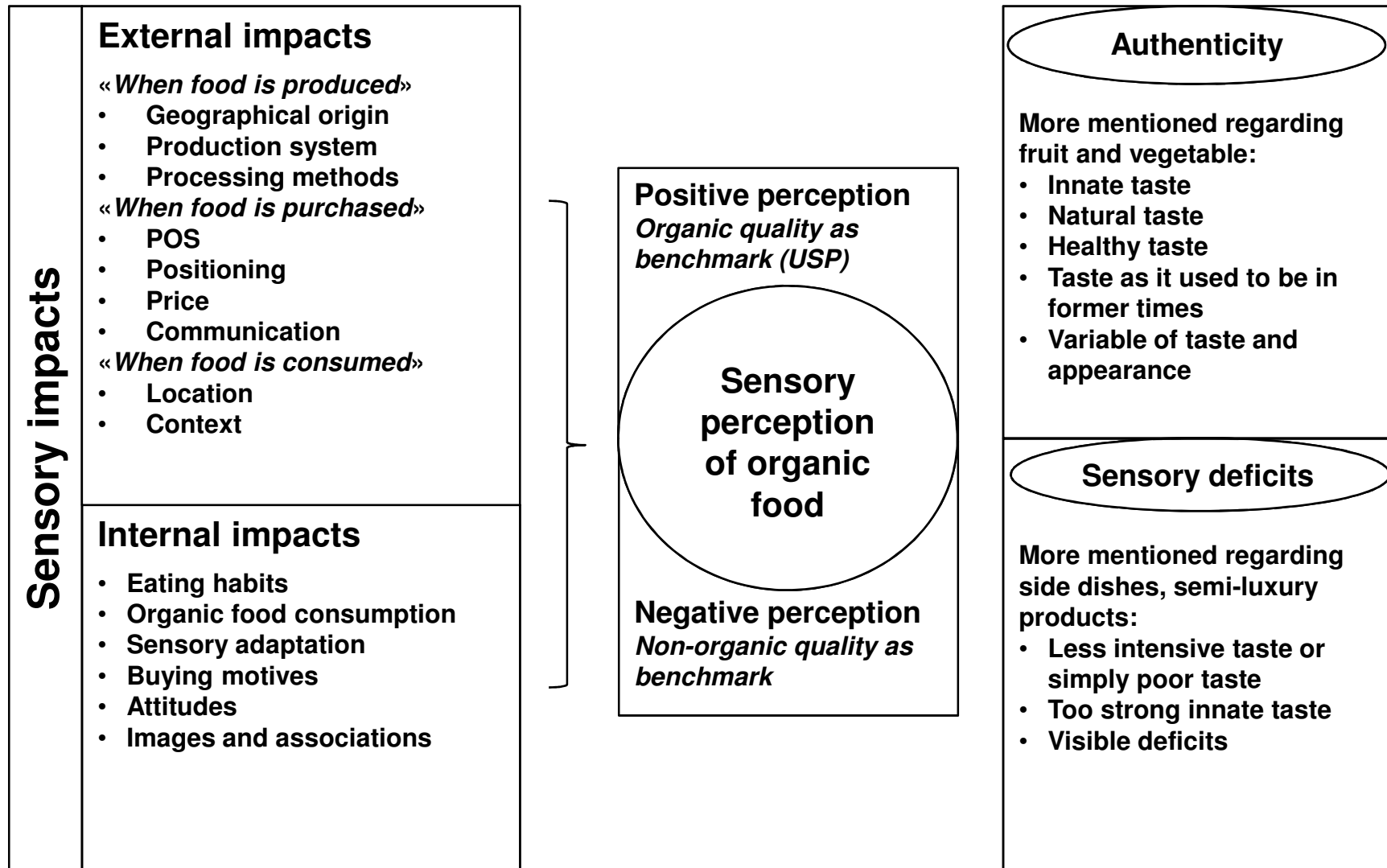
- › **Conduction of focus groups: September 2009 – February 2010**
- › **Analysis**
 - › **Recording**
 - › **Transcription**
 - › **Coding**
 - › **Theme analysis**
 - › **Comparison of light and heavy users**
 - › **Cross country analysis**

Participants' criteria for evaluation of sensory characteristics

	DE	FR	IT	NL	PL	CH
Taste	++	++	++	++	++	++
Odour	+	+/-	++	--	+	+
Appearance	+/-	+	-	+/-	+/-	+/-
Texture / mouth feeling	-	++	-	-	+/-	-

Quantification of relevance: ++ = very relevant; + = relevant; +/- = partly relevant; - = limited relevance; -- = no relevance

Concept of sensory perception of organic food



Sensory perceptions: examples

› Authenticity:

- › *“Organic products have a more typical, authentic taste. Nowadays, conventional strawberries are tasteless.” (FR.H)*
- › *“Vegetable and fruit are the products I can taste the most differences. Here **is** the conventional (fruit and vegetable) are rather flavourless and of watery consistence or of a certain colour that you can relate to tastes. I simply expect of organic fruit and vegetable, that a tomato tastes like a tasty tomato and that it does not just look as if it had no taste or that it tastes watery.” (CH.H)*

Sensory perceptions: examples

- › ***“The taste (of organic products) is always pure because of the other cultivation. Not rushed with artificial fertilizer. That’s why it is tastier, purer. It has grown by itself.” (NL.H)***
- › ***„I believe that if it (organic food) tastes better, there are more ingredients. That’s healthier too.” (DE.H)***
- › ***“I like buying organic wine from time to time. What I like about it is that I am always surprised with what I get. Each bottle, even from the same wine or the same vintage tastes different! It makes me think about the small wineries I have visited in the past.” (FR.L)***

Opportunities for organic sensory marketing

- › **Consumers' opinions of sensory marketing differed strongly**
- › **Sensory marketing/information useful**
 - › to support decision making, especially when buying a product for the first time
 - › to inform about sensory properties of old varieties or of less common or typical organic fruit or vegetable varieties
 - › to inform about food preparation and consumption
 - › information on processing techniques, in particular on the absence of additives or preservatives
 - › to make consumers aware of possible sensory differences between organic and conventional products or on possible modification of sensory characteristics over time.

Requirements for organic sensory marketing

- › Sensory marketing system should have potential to adjust to potential variations
- › **Supported by sensory explanation this variations versify the organic food market and give alternation to the conventional food sector.**
- › Marketing should be reliable and objective

Conclusions

- › **Sensory perception of organic food is influenced by multiple external and internal factors**
- › **Sensory of organic food mainly positively perceived by organic consumers**
 - › **Authenticity**
- › **However, various negative perceptions came up**
- › **Organic product diversification as unique selling proposition (USP) versus non-organic benchmark**
- › **Sensory marketing important tool to inform consumers about existing sensory differences**

Thank you for your attention!

Ablauf Fokusgruppen

1. Einführung
2. Warming- up „ sensorische Eigenschaften von biologisch Angebautem“
3. Mit sensorischen Eigenschaften von Biolebensmitteln verbundenen Assoziationen
4. Erwartung an sensorische Eigenschaften von Biolebensmitteln in Bezug auf Standardisierung/ Variabilität
5. Erwartung an das Marketing von sensorischen Aspekten von Biolebensmitteln
6. Schluss



Schlüsselfragen:

- › **Welche Sinne sind für Sie von Bedeutung, wenn Sie essen?**
- › **Bitte nehmen Sie sich einen Moment Zeit, um sich die Sensorik von Biolebensmitteln vorzustellen. Welche Art von Bildern kommt Ihnen in den Sinn?**
- › **Nehmen Sie sensorische Unterschiede zu konventionellen Lebensmitteln wahr, wenn Sie Bioprodukte essen?**
- › **Nehmen Sie grundsätzlich an, dass Bioprodukte eher ähnlich wie konventionelle Produkte schmecken oder verschieden?**
- › **Erinnern Sie sich an Situationen, in denen Ihre Kaufentscheidungen beeinflusst wurden durch sensorische Informationen und wie?**