

Recognition of the regional food brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” by consumers in the Region of South Moravia

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the results of research carried out in 2014 - 2015 in the Region of South Moravia, the Czech Republic. Only partial results of the research into the brand recognition of “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” (Regional food South Moravia Region) are presented. The questionnaire survey was conducted at the turn of 2014 to 2015. A sample of 450 respondents in this region was used. The Pearson’s Chi-squared test was utilized to test the independence of the brand recognition of “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” on socio-demographic factors, such as a respondents’ age, gender, level of education, as well as monthly income of their families. The results show that the majority of respondents in the Region of South Moravia do not recognize this brand and that women, young consumers and consumers with the highest family incomes are the most important target groups for this brand.

Keywords: region, marketing communication, branding, Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj

Introduction

The establishment of the first regional brand system (hereinafter RB) in the Czech Republic goes back to the year 2000. The trend towards seeking to create regional brands and the certification of regional production came to the Czech Republic from western countries. Its aim is to make small and middle-sized food producers more visible and more easily identifiable by consumers. Kögl and Tietze (2010), among others, state that, market saturation from both global as well as local products, product indistinguishability, the increasing awareness and demands of consumers, as well as

new trends in marketing and marketing communication, have all had a particular impact on this trend. Starzyczná and Pellešová (2009), and Frey (2010), only point to these facts in connection with increasing consumer awareness. State institutions and mainly non-profit organizations are the coordinators of the brand systems in the Czech Republic. For example, Čarnogurský (2014), or Vochozka (2008), highlight the significance and specifics of marketing communication in such types of organizations. At present, the most important task of company marketers is to increase these organizations' visibility (Frey 2010).

Developing regional brands and certifying goods is one of the ways regions are seeking to react to new marketing trends. McEntee (2003) states that, the regional branding of food is the result of consumer pressure with regards to food quality and the need to create an alternative for those who prefer to purchase local products to global ones. The regional branding of food is mainly focused on the development of rural areas with natural and cultural diversity (Tregar et al. 2007). As Hollis (2008) points out, the regional branding of food can be based on several pillars e.g. local culture, traditions and habits, nostalgia, but on the basis of logistical advantages, etc., too. La Trobe (2001) sees advantages for consumers in terms of freshness by sidelining intermediaries in the supply chain, as well as in the quality of food production for reasonable prices. He also suggests that regional food branding can be particularly significant for distant regions which depend on agricultural production; these systems bring economic benefits to them. Regional food brands therefore provide suitable opportunities for small and medium-sized local or regional producers; they produce high quality food products but lack the appropriate communication instruments (e.g. because of lack of knowledge or high costs) with which to inform customers accordingly. Research by Kalábová and Turčínková (2012), and Horská, Ůrgeiová and Prokejnová (2011), proves the significance of branding for Czech consumers. Slabá (2015), among others, states that local brands can also be perceived positively in foreign countries e.g. in China. The development of regional brands is also closely connected to the development of a local identity (GoDu 2015). Messely et al. (2015), state that the implementation of regional branding increases a region's attractiveness for local inhabitants in all areas of their active lives – work and family life, as well as leisure time. An important factor that also influences the success of regional brand systems is local knowledge of the local brands.

Brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”

The brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”, the logo of which can be seen in Figure 1, was founded in 2010 and is incorporated in the national brand system “Regionální potravina” (Regional food); it is the most important and best known regional brand system.

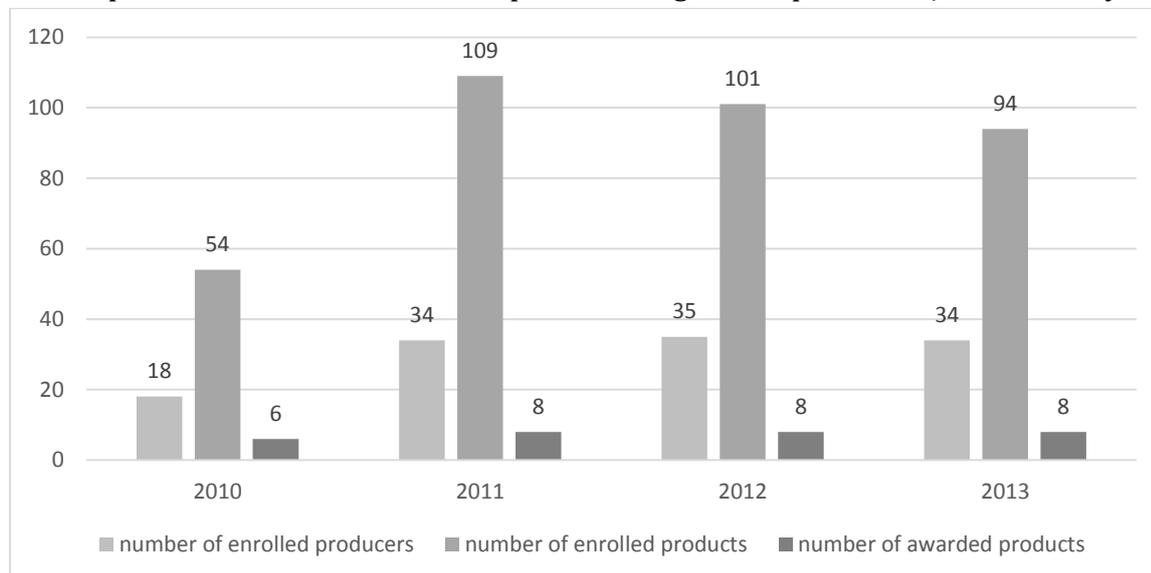
Figure 1: Brand logo of “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”



Source: Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic – Regional food. Accessible at <http://eagri.cz/public/web/regionalni-potraviny/o-projektu/metodiky-a-loga/?pos=10>

The brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” is coordinated by the Regional Agrarian Chamber of the Region of South Moravia and is announced once a year. The brand is valid within the entire Region of South Moravia (Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic 2014). The main purpose of the competition is to award the winning products in nine categories the status of a regional brand. The entrants (producers) have to fulfil 3 types of conditions (general conditions, specific conditions, regional conditions) which form the basis for the methodology for granting regional brand status. Those products that meet the given criteria are evaluated by a committee; this committee publishes its assessments and subsequently awards the winning products in each category the status of “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” (Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic 2014).

Figure 2: Overview of competition entrants (producers), enrolled products and winners for the period 2010-2013 in the competition “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”



Source: authors (based on data from Regional Agrarian Chamber of the Region of South Moravia)

Figure 2 shows that since 2010, when the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” was established, the number of producers that enrolled in the competition remained constant, but that the number of products enrolled increased approximately twofold.

Table 1 gives an overview of important facts about the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”.

Table 1: Facts about the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”

Regional brand	Regionální potravina Jihomoravská kraj
Region's location	Jihomoravský kraj – Region of South Moravia
Area	7 196 km ²
Population	1 166 313 inhabitants
Population density	162 inh./km ²
Potential of the region	Agriculture, wine growing, tourism
Present situation (finances)	Support from EU and Ministry of Agriculture
Coordinator	The State Agricultural Intervention Fund and Regional Agrarian Chamber of the Region of South Moravia
Conditions of membership	Competition
Criteria for certification	Origin and quality of production
Number of certified products (2013)	33
Established	2010
Distribution channels	Farmers markets, mobile shops, health food shops, supermarkets and hypermarkets.
Brand's focus	Food production
Certification duration	2 years
Conditions for certification – product	Fulfillment of criteria according to methodology
Conditions for certification – companies	Fulfillment of criteria according to methodology
Product categories	9

Source: authors

When granting a brand, the evaluation committee considers the following (Regional Agrarian Chamber of the Region of South Moravia 2014):

1. *innovative aspects (originality, origin, regionalism, innovation in manufacturing);*
2. *sensory evaluation (taste, design, smell, etc.);*
3. *used materials, ingredients and method of production (technological aspects, use of local ingredients – percentage of South Moravia origin);*
4. *product design (branding, design, wrapping technique, protection against damage);*
5. *specific and supporting evaluation (product's impact on health, product availability, organic product).*

The origin of the product is a fundamental criterion when applying for it to be awarded the status of "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj". The product must be made of local ingredients sourced from the Region of South Moravia, or if required for objective reasons, domestic sources. The minimum ratio of such ingredients is 70%. The main ingredient has to be of 100% domestic origin. All other ingredients must be listed, including the percentages and origins thereof (Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic 2014).

Materials and Methods

This paper presents the partial results of research into the impact of socio-demographic factors on the brand recognition of "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj". At the turn of 2014 and 2015, primary research was undertaken among consumers aged 18-65 years in all the main provincial towns in South Moravia (excluding the regional capital, Brno) - Blansko, Břeclav, Hodonín, Vyškov and Znojmo. Respondents were selected on the basis of quotas for specific socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, monthly family income, education). The responses of 450 participants who took part in the survey were selected for further analysis. The data were analyzed using the Pearson's Chi-square test of independence to test the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis was determined as follows: "Recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the chosen socio-demographic factor".

This paper presents the first results of the Pearson's Chi-square test of independence on the following hypotheses:

H1: Recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondents' gender.

H2: Recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondents' age.

H3: Recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondents' level of completed education.

H4: Recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondents' net income.

Categorical data were obtained during the analysis of the questionnaire survey. Contingency tables were subsequently used as an easy way to display the relations between this data. Subject to the character of the data, suitable tests of independence were carried out (see Hendl 2006). According to Řezanková (1997), for the purpose of a contingency table of the $r \times c$ type (r is the number of rows, c is the number of columns), the following test statistic was used the most often:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_i \sum_j \frac{(n_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}} \quad (1)$$

Alternatively:

$$G^2 = \sum_i \sum_j n_{ij} \ln \frac{n_{ij}}{e_{ij}} \quad (2)$$

e_{ij} is the expected and n_{ij} the observed frequency. Either the test statistic χ^2 of Pearson's chi-square was used to test independence, or G^2 for the likelihood-ratio test. These two statistics are asymptotically $\chi^2_{(r-1)(c-1)}$ distributed. The null hypothesis of the test assumes independence.

In order to apply the Pearson's Chi-square test, a maximum of 20% of the expected frequencies must be less than five (see Řezanková 2007; Agresti 1990). Where this test could not be applied, Fisher's exact test was used or the simulated p-value of the χ^2 statistic was calculated (see Anděl 2005).

The p-value for each hypothesis was calculated by means of the Statistica software. Where $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of an alternative hypothesis on the basis of the assumption of the dependence of the variables.

Results

The results of the research show that consumers in the Region of South Moravia do not recognize the brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj". Of the 450 respondents, only 211 (46.9% of the investigated sample) answered positively to the question whether they were familiar with the brand.

Table 2: Recognition of the brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" according to gender

Recognition of brand "Regionální potravina JmK"	Men	Women	Row Totals
Yes	91	120	211
Column %	43.33%	50.00%	
No	119	120	239
Column %	56.67%	50.00%	
Total	210	240	450

Source: authors

Table 2 shows that 91 men (i.e. 43.33%) and 120 women (i.e. 50%) said they knew the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”. Women in the region therefore know the brand better than men.

Table 3: Dependence of recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” on the respondents’ gender

	Chi-square	df	P
Pearson’s Chi-square	1.998850	df=1	p=0.15742

Source: authors

The p-value of Pearson’s Chi-square test of independence is 0.16. The hypothesis of independence was therefore not rejected at a level of independence of 5%. The H1 hypothesis - recognition of the regional brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” does not depend on the respondents’ gender – was therefore confirmed.

Table 4: Recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” depends on the respondents age

Recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina JmK”	18 - 35 years	36 - 50 years	51 - 65 years	Row Totals
A	76	70	65	211
Column %	50.67%	46.67%	43.33%	
B	74	80	85	239
Column %	49.33%	53.33%	56.67%	
Totals	150	150	150	450

Source: authors

The results of the research presented in Table 4 show that the brand recognition of “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” is the highest (50.67%) among the youngest consumers (age category 18-35 years). The brand is only slightly less well-known by those respondents in the age category 36-50 years (46.67 %). The respondents with the lowest level of brand recognition (43.33%) were the oldest consumers (age category 51-60 years).

Table 5: Dependence of recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” on the respondents age

	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson’s Chi-square	1.624066	df=2	p=0.44395

Source: authors

When considering the dependence of knowing the brand according to age, the p-value of Pearson's Chi-square test of independence is significantly higher than the defined level of significance. The H2 hypothesis was therefore not rejected at a level of significance of 5%. The H2 hypothesis - recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondents' age - was therefore confirmed.

Table 6: Recognition of the brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" depends on the level of completed education

Recognition of the brand "Regionální potravina JmK"	Elementary school	High school and apprenticeship	College	University and Higher Technical School	Row Totals
A	20	73	80	38	211
Column %	44.44%	44.24%	47.06%	54.29%	
B	25	92	90	32	239
Column %	55.56%	55.76%	52.94%	45.71%	
Totals	45	165	170	70	450

Source: authors

On the basis of the results in Table 6 it can be concluded that brand recognition is the highest among those respondents with the highest education i.e. university and higher technical school (54.29% of respondents). The brand recognition levels among respondents with completed elementary school, high school or college education were very similar, ranging between 44.24 - 47.06%.

Table 7: Dependence of recognition of the brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" on the respondent's level of completed education

	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson's Chi-square	2.111910	df=3	p=0.54951

Source: authors

The p-value of Pearson's Chi-square test of independence is 0.54. The hypothesis of independence was therefore not rejected at a level of significance 5%. The H3 hypothesis - recognition of the regional brand "Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj" does not depend on the respondent's highest level of completed education - was therefore confirmed.

Table 8: Recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” depends on the respondent’s net monthly income

Recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina JmK”	Up to CZK 25,000 incl.	CZK 25,001-50,000	CZK 50,001 and above	Row Totals
A	87	102	22	211
Column %	40.28%	51.78%	59.46%	
B	129	95	15	239
Column %	59.72%	48.22%	40.54%	
Totals	216	197	37	450

Source: authors

The results presented in Table 8 show that brand recognition is the highest among those respondents with a net monthly income of over CZK 50,000 (59.46 %). Approximately half of those respondents with a net monthly income of CZK 25,000 – 50,000 recognized the brand too. The poorest level of brand recognition was in the group of respondents with a net monthly income of up to CZK 25,000 (40,28 %).

Table 9: Dependence of recognition of the brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” on the respondent’s level of net monthly income

	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson’s Chi-square	8.028584	df=2	p=0.01806

Source: Own elaboration

The p-value of Pearson’s Chi-square test is 0.02. The H4 hypothesis - recognition of the regional brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” does not depend on the respondent’s level of net monthly income - was rejected at a level of significance of 5%. For the Region of South Moravia it was statistically proven that the recognition of the brand is dependent on net monthly family income.

Discussion

The results of the research show that the level of brand recognition for the regional brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” among consumers is low. The brand was unknown to more than half of the addressed respondents. Similar research conducted in 2015 on brand recognition in the Vysočina region showed that 53.8% of respondents knew the local regional brand (Chalupová and Prokop 2016). Consumers in the Vysočina region therefore knew their regional brand better than in South Moravia. Similar research conducted in 2012 in the Vysočina region established levels of brand recognition of only 35.9% (Chalupová, Prokop and Rojík 2012).

Further analysis of the results shows that brand recognition of the regional brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj” is greater among women than men, although dependence was not statistically proven. This finding can be interpreted, for example, within the context of research results published by the agency Factum Invenio (2008), and Vysekalová and Mikeš (2009, p. 30), who concluded that among Czech consumers, women prefer brands more often than men. Based on the research results presented in this paper, it can be stated that the levels of brand recognition for the given brand was the highest amongst those respondents with a university degree and in the youngest age category (18-35 years). It has been proven, that both groups when making purchasing decisions gain information from more sources, and contrary to other groups use the internet as their source of information (Rojík 2015). The most interesting fact is that the dependence of brand recognition of the given brand on net monthly income was statistically proven. The results show that those respondents with a net monthly income of over CZK 50,001 know the given brand the most. The lowest level of brand recognition was among those respondents with a net monthly income of up to CZK 25,000.

The results should also be viewed in parallel with the findings of Zámková and Prokop (2014), who investigated the levels of brand recognition for products marked as BIO (organic). Their research showed that consumers with higher incomes knew the food products labelled BIO less well than those with lower incomes. Similar conclusions were presented by Rojík, Chalupová and Prokop (2014), who found that consumers with lower incomes were more aware of regional foods in the Vysočina region than those consumers with higher incomes. These facts highlight the specific characteristics of South Moravian consumers, regional differences, as well as consumers’ attitudes to products marked as “regional food” and as “BIO”.

Conclusion

In the Czech Republic, regional food branding is a rather new tool for informing consumers and gaining their interest in locally produced food. Food labelled as a regional brand, in contrast to larger scale food production, does not tend to attract consumers on the basis of, for example, low prices. In addition to fulfilling a consumer’s basic needs, regional brands also try to satisfy consumers’ higher demands for quality, ingredients, etc. Defining this specific added value is one of the objectives of marketing such regional brands. The findings presented in this research show that consumers in the Region of South Moravia are not very aware of the Czech regional brand system (or its regional brand “Regionální potravina Jihomoravský kraj”). For example, in the border region of Lower Austria, 64.5% of addressed consumers know the brand Genuss Niederösterreich, the Austrian equivalent of the Czech regional brand (Rojík 2015). The main aim of The State Agricultural Intervention Fund and Regional Agrarian Chamber of the Region of South Moravia is to improve publicity and increase awareness of the regional brand in the region. The results also show that brand recognition among women was higher, which reflects the fact that women prefer branded food much more

often than men, which in terms of marketing makes women the more interesting target group. The research also showed that brand recognition was higher amongst younger people and those respondents with the highest level of completed education, making them also an attractive target group for marketers. Even in those groups in which brand recognition is poor there are opportunities for marketers to increase awareness. However, the most significant group in the Region of South Moravia for marketers is the group of respondents with the highest incomes, simply because branded products usually sell for higher prices. This extensive research is one of the first to have been conducted in the Region of South Moravia focused on regional food branding. The results presented in this article could be put to practical use in marketing terms, but also STP processes, by the coordinators of this regional food brand and other food brand coordinators in the Region of South Moravia.

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