Attitudes and Preferences of Kosovar Consumer towards Quality and Origin of Meat

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Abstract

Quality and safety are important attributes for consumers in developed and transitional countries such as Kosovo. This study aims to examine Kosovar consumers' characteristics, attitude and preferences for meat and to provide meat consumer profiling using a descriptive analysis together with the Food-Related Lifestyle approach. We drew a sample of 300 Kosovar consumers by intercept sampling in Prishtina, Prizren and Gjilan (largest Kosovo cities) during December 2013 – January 2014. Results suggest that Kosovar consumers perceive country of origin (COO), especially domestic origin as a sign of quality and safety for meat. Three consumer profiles were identified through segmentation analysis. These consumer profiles could be labeled as foodie, conservative food consumer and uninvolved food consumer. Foodie is the most interesting target segment for Kosovar meat. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for businesses and policy makers.

Keywords: Consumer preferences, country of origin, quality, meat, Kosovo

Problem statement

In terms of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and jobs, agriculture is an important sector in Kosovo's economy. Its contribution to the annual GDP is 12% (MAFRD 2014). Agriculture also provided the largest employment opportunities amongst others sectors in post-war Kosovo, accounting for approximately 35% of total jobs (MAFRD 2013). Livestock is the most important agri-food division - 55% of the farms have livestock while about 45% of the agricultural production value comes from livestock products, where meat is the main output (MAFRD 2014). Hence, livestock sector in general, and meat production specifically play the major role in rural development. Moreover, dairy and meat's local production is dominated by bovine cattle, given favorable natural conditions (MAFRD 2014). The meat industry is growing and is gaining importance in the National food sustainability along with social development policies.

While meat is the most important livestock product, on the consumer side, it is also one of the main food items - meat represents 19% of the average Kosovo household consumption basket (MAFRD 2014). Meat consumption per capita is in the range of 41 - 44 kg (Bytyqi et al. 2012; FAO 2014). Red meat, especially beef, is the most popular product, followed by chicken meat. The main beef products are traditional salami and prosciutto (ham). Although overall meat consumption in Kosovo is lower than the EU average, it is higher as compared to other neighboring countries. This accounts to the consumption of beef and chicken, while pork consumption is insignificant due to religious and cultural reasons. As the level of income has been increasing, it is likely that meat consumption will be also increasing in the coming years.

Although there has been an increasing trend of livestock production in the last decade, currently Kosovo is not self-sufficient in meat production and relies heavily on imports. Domestic production covers only 19% of total annual demand and the rest is imported to meet Kosovar consumer demand. Ninety-six percent of total chicken consumption as well as 75% of total beef consumption are covered by imports (Bytyqi et al. 2012). Currently, 30 companies in the industrial meat-processing sector produce the merchandise mainly from the imported meat, whilst few small traditional processors relied mostly on fresh domestic meat. The main reason is that, imported meat as well as processed meat is usually cheaper than Kosovar products. Imported meat and processed meat are mainly imported from Brazil, Poland, and the USA (Bytyqi et al. 2012). Therefore, although capacities of the meat processing industry are sufficient for processing around 300 tons meat/day, they are currently using around 20% of the installed capacity.

Recently, Kosovo meat industry is not able to rely on domestic production, which may affect sustainability of the industry. As a result, the government is attempting to introduce supportive policies and incentives to promote business opportunities in this field, which are aiming at enabling Kosovo to rely increasingly on its domestic meat in the near future. Besides improving on the production side, one of the main concerns by the policy makers and the industry are about consumer preferences along with the demand for meat. For example, what signs of quality and safety are consumers looking for? Are there any consumer preferences for domestic meat in Kosovo? Hence, understanding consumer preferences and perception is important in the decision-making of key stakeholders, both policy makers and private sectors. Moreover, this issue is a priority for the industry, which should remain competitive in the market. Despite its importance, limited research is available on consumer habits, preferences and perception in Kosovo. Therefore, our study aims to fill this gap by investigating Kosovar consumers' consumption habits (e.g., consumption rate, shopping outlet), preferences and attitude toward different attributes of meat.

Many studies investigated consumer perceptions, preferences, and demand for meat (e.g., Becker et al. 2000; Bernués et al. 2003a; Bernués et al. 2003b; Grunert et al. 2004; Loureiro and Umberger 2007; Van Loo et al. 2014; Verbeke and Viaene 1999; Verbeke and Ward 2006). Previous research on consumer perceptions and preferences for meat in Kosovo (Bytyqi et al. 2012), and other neighboring Western Balkan countries (Imami et al, 2011; Zhllima et al, 2015) is also available. A special focus of these studies was on (perceived) meat safety and quality, which are undoubtedly the main issues that concern consumers when purchasing meat products, particularly in Europe. The consumers have become increasingly concerned about the safety of food, mainly because of several sector-wide crises in the last decade (e.g., the Bovine spongiform encephalopathy or BSE crisis, the dioxin crisis, classical swine fever, and hoof and mouth disease in Europe). Glitsch (2000) conducted a cross-national study about European consumers' perceptions of fresh meat quality in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK. She found that, when it comes to any beef and pork, the place of purchase is an important quality indicator when consumers make a purchasing decision while color is the major important intrinsic quality cue for beef, pork and chicken. Freshness is regarded as a signal that warrants safety. Becker et al. (2000), conducted a consumer survey in Germany and found that important extrinsic cues consumers used in judging quality of fresh meat are country of origin and place of purchase while flavor or smell are important intrinsic cues. Moreover, country of origin and freshness are of most importance for assessing safety of meat whereas the most trusted source of information on the safety of meat is the butchery.

Due to the limited numbers of the previous consumer studies in Kosovo, consumer preferences and attitude toward different quality and safety attributes of meat products tend to be our focus in this study. In order to deliver more useful information to industry, the consumer segmentation analysis was conducted based on their food related lifestyle (FRL). This approach was first developed by Grunert et al. (1993) and Brunsø and Grunert (1995) as a mediator between consumers' values and their behavior. Afterwards, it was applied in different cultural contexts (Wycherley et al. 2008; De Boer et al. 2004; Brunsø et al. 1995) and tested for cross-cultural validity (Scholderer et al. 2004). The FRL model intends to understand lifestyles as a cognitive construct, which explains consumer food behavior (Obermowe et al. 2011). A food-related lifestyle comprises of five (5) cognitive categories, namely: ways of shopping, quality aspects for evaluating food products, cooking methods, consumption situations and purchasing motives. Although the FRL approach appears to be a very useful way of segmenting food consumers, only few published studies have used the FRL model for meat consumption (e.g., Grunert 2006; Bernués et al. 2012) and there is no published studies on meat consumption of Kosovar consumers. Thus, this study is aimed at: (i) describing Kosovar consumers' characteristics, attitudes and preferences related to meat products; (ii) segmenting consumer groups according to their food related lifestyle; and (iii) providing insight information about Kosovar consumers' preferences for meat and deliver possible strategies for policy makers, industry and marketer.

This paper is organized as follows. The second section describes methodology. The third section gives a detailed overview of survey's results. The fourth section discusses the main research findings; further remarks and suggestions for future research activities are also included.

Methodology

Kosovar consumer survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire based on literature review, expert interviews, and consumer focus groups carried out in the context of the FAO Project "Policy assistance to Kosovo to identify support measures linking local agricultural production with the domestic market TCP/KOS/3401" (FAO 2014). The questionnaire included questions concerning many aspects of consumers' usage habits and attitude toward quality and safety of meat. As for the aim of segmenting and profiling them, a section of the questionnaire was designed according to the Food Related Lifestyle (FRL) instrument (Grunert 1993), because of its consistency in results across cultures and countries. Due to the need to include a large amount of information and other aspects in the questionnaire, we decided to use a reduced version proposed by Dimech et al. (2011). The five (5) aspects of FRL we focused on, comprised of: (i) subjectivity of quality, (ii) consumer difference, (iii) intangible dimensions, (iv) information environment, and (v) price. The questionnaire was pre-tested through direct interviews with consumers.

The questionnaire was structured in seven parts: (1) general shopping habits; (2) meat consumption habits; (3) food-related lifestyle; (4) attitudes, purchasing and consumption habits for meat products; (5) price consciousness; (6) safety and quality perception toward meat products; and (7) respondent and household characteristics. The questions took closed-form and multiple choices. When it came to the attitude section, respondents were asked to give their opinion toward statements according to a 5-point Likert-like scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Respondents also had an option to skip a question, in order not to force them to reply, which might end up in incorrect answers.

Data collection was conducted in Prishtina (capital city), Prizren and Gjilan – the 3 largest cities of Kosovo during December 2013 – January 2014. The interviews were carried out by trained/experienced graduates/students under the supervision of the authors of this paper. Altogether, we interviewed 300 consumers – the sample structure was proportional to the population size of the three selected main urban centers. Before the interview started, interviewers asked four (4) screening questions related to being the main household food shoppers; being the responsible for preparing/cooking food in household; being the person who decides what food to buy; and consuming meat.

Data have been analyzed using both mono and multivariate techniques. Basic descriptive approach has been used to describe Kosovar consumer characteristics in terms of socio-demographics, consumption habits and perceptions toward food safety and quality of meat. Consumer groups were identified using the data contained in the FRL section of the questionnaire, by applying the classical segmentation approach. First, a data reduction procedure was applied, which aimed at defining specific dimensions as useful ways to describe consumers. Afterwards, a subject classification method was employed, which aimed at grouping the individuals according to these specifications. Finally, we evaluated the resulting clusters according to socio-demographic and consumption habit variables and tested the clusters for differences in attitudes towards domestic meat.

Results

Sample Characteristics

In summary, descriptive statistics for the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. We found that the respondents' characteristics are consistent with Kosovo urban census. The gender structure of the sample was quite balanced where-by average respondent's age was 40 years. The majority of respondents hold a university degree (49%). Median respondents possess the high school diploma (39%) while around 10% of respondents have lower education. Thus, respondents are largely educated, which is common feature of urban areas in Kosovo. Around 40% of respondents have 5-6 household members, which is also common for Kosovo's household. The majority of respondents have household income between 501-800 euro/month. The average food expenditure is 314 euro/month. However, levels of household food expenditure are quite diversified among respondents.

Purchasing and Consumption Habits

The meat consumption data reflect the statistical data about Kosovo's population. Beef and chicken are by far the most consumed type of meat among the interviewees. Consumption of chicken is ca 2.5 kg/household/week while consumption of beef is ca 2.4 kg/household/week More than 90% percent of the respondents stated that they never consume pork (as expected, based on cultural and religious ground). Also small ruminant (lamb and goad-kid meat) are not consumed often (particularly goat-kid – 70% state that they never consume this type of meat). Among the processed meat products, "suxhuk" (traditional Kosovo spicy salami produced from bovine meat) is the most consumed. Figures shown, reflect the situation in the urban areas that have been analyzed, but it is important to point out that the situation is different in rural areas (lower purchasing power, on one hand, but also auto-consumption of farm products on the other hand), as well as in smaller poorer towns where overall consumption can be lower. Unfortunately, no detailed secondary statistics were available to compare or complement population data with the survey sample profile. Nevertheless, respondents mostly agreed with the statement regarding price-consciousness (i.e. when I am in a shop I will always check prices on alternatives before I buy, when I buy or shop, I really look for special offers, in a store, I check the prices, even when I am buying inexpensive items).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristic of the sample

Socio-demographic characteristics	**Percent of total (%) (N = 300)**
Gender	
Male	46.8%
Female	53.2%
Age *(Mean, st.dev.)*	*40 (13.097)*
19-30 years old	29.10%
31-40 years old	21.74%
41-50 years old	21.40%
51-60 years old	21.40%
More than 60 years old	6.36%
Education level *(Median, st.dev.)*	*High school (0.745)*
Basic (4 years)	2.4%
Middle (9 years)	9.1%
High school (12 years)	39.2%
University	49.3%
Household size *(Median, st.dev.)*	*6 members (2.075)*
2 members	1.7%
3-4 members	24.0%
5-6 members	39.9%
7-8 members	25.3%
More than 8 members	9.1%
Income *(Median, st.dev.)*	*501-800 EUR (1.311)*
150-250 EUR	9.1%
251-500 EUR	30.9%
501-800 EUR	32.6%
801-1,200 EUR	17.1%
1,201-1,500 EUR	5.0%
1,501-2,000 EUR	2.7%
More than 2,000 EUR	2.7%
Monthly expenditure on food *(Mean, st.dev.)*	*314 EUR (136.401)*
80-200 EUR	26.9%
201-300 EUR	33.7%
301-400 EUR	25.3%
401-500 EUR	8.4%
More than 500 EUR	5.7%

Results suggest that respondents prefer to buy meat products at specialized butcheries, followed by supermarkets and farms, respectively. The change in life style in larger urban areas is driving consumer-purchasing preference towards supermarkets; therefore, many respondents prefer to buy from supermarkets. This might be because it is more convenient and they could buy several other things at once. However, most of the surveyed consumers still prefer to buy meat from butcheries (that is especially true for beef). This confirms the view of consumers who participated in preliminary focus groups and expressed more trust in the butchery to provide quality meat for them. Purchasing meat directly from farms can somehow guarantee local origin and freshness of meat but it is less convenient, therefore, it is the least preferred shopping outlet comparing to others.

Actually, it is common for most households to establish a long lasting trust relationship with one butchery. About half of the consumers tend to buy meat from the same retailer/butcher. Interestingly, many consumers would prefer to buy meat at the same place where it was slaughtered – this could be taken as a strategy for the consumer that seeks a guarantee that the meat is fresh. However, this preference indicates the level of awareness among consumers – according to safety standard meat should not be sold or bought at the same place where animals are slaughtered. Thus, consumer understanding, information and awareness for food safety are major concerns.

Our questionnaire also included a series of questions aimed at assessing consumers’ perceptions of Kosovan meat products versus foreign products. This is not the focus area for this study, but in order to provide a background on consumer's opinion, it is useful to highlight that, most of the respondents perceived domestic beef and chicken to be safer and higher quality than imported ones and they strongly disagree and/or disagree and/or are uncertain that imported beef is of high quality. Expiration (or best before) date is the most important characteristic for consumers when buying beef products, and having a food safety certificate is perceived as very important as well (here we did not define what type of certificate). Origin is perceived as very important – domestic origin is superior to import origin – including the EU origin as well. Knowing the retailer and producer is considered more important than brand reputation. Similar answers/preferences were stated also for chicken.

Consumer Segments and Profiles: the Food-Related Lifestyle Approach

In this study, we performed a segmentation analysis based on 244 consumers who answered all questions including socio-demographics and consumption habits. In order to make a segmentation of Kosovar consumers using a FRL approach, we first investigated the relationship among the 18 FRL items, in order to convert them into a smaller number of independent and easily interpretable dimensions or factors. We thus run a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. We found that one item (question – in our house, nibbling has taken over and replaced set eating hours) is not grouped into any factor; therefore, we decided to exclude that question and ran again the PCA with Varimax rotation. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin, KMO statistics were 0.760, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser 1974). The Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) reached statistical significance, thus supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Factors from Principal Components Analysis are the results of PCA, and in Table 2 we show the variables associated to the principal components extracted. Bold values indicate higher correlation between variables and factors. In the last column, Cronbach's Alpha tests are shown. Cronbach's Alpha values are between 0.4 and 0.6. Results from the data reduction procedure suggest that in this dataset the 17 variables analyzed may be grouped into five significantly different factors that explain 54.9% of the variance. Results from factor loading of each variable among the factors extracted may be associated with: (i) the role of food in the consumer's social life and sensory awareness, (ii) experimentation, (iii) information on product purchased, (iv) tradition and, (v) convenience and advice seeker.

The first factor labelled, "social life and sensory awareness", explains 22.77% of the total variance. It is related to those variables indicating that consumers view food as an important role in social life to get together with family and friends. Food is for them an involving sensational experience as well. The second factor called, "experimentation", explains 10.12% of the total variance. It is linked to variables showing consumers' willing to experience new tastes and trying out different recipes. They also love food shopping. The third factor labelled, "information on product purchased", explains 8.20% of the total variance. This factor collects variables showing consumers' interests in getting information on the characteristics of the food that they are consuming or buying. It also indicates the degree to which planning is important for the household when it comes to buying food and the planning to cook for meals. The fourth factor, which explains 7.35% of the total variance, is labelled "tradition". It collects variables indicating preferences for familiar food and traditional approaches to cooking, including price consciousness. Finally, the fifth factor called "convenience and advice seeker" explains 6.47% of the total variance. It is described by variables, which suggest preference for convenience (regarding cooking) and prefer to buy food at specialty shop and receive advice from expert.

Based on the five factors obtained from the PCA, including the standardized score of the question we excluded at the beginning (called, "snacks"), we performed a cluster analysis, using a K- means clustering technique (Hair et al. 2006). First, a hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward linkage method (using Euclidean distances) was performed, in order to define the optimum number of clusters. Coefficients from the agglomeration schedule were analyzed and used to create a reformed agglomeration table, with the aim of identifying the ideal number of clusters, indicated that the ideal number of clusters would be three (3). Finally, using the K-means clustering method, three clusters were identified. Results from the cluster analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Factors from Principal Components Analysis

Questions/ Variables[1]	Component*					Cronbach Alpha Test
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	
Dining with friends is an important part of my social life.	**0.779**	0.028	0.054	-0.064	0.224	**0.61**
Going out for dinner is a regular part of my household eating habits.	**0.760**	0.178	-0.039	-0.099	0.116	
I always plan what we are going to eat a couple of days in advance.	**0.550**	0.242	0.151	0.266	-0.417	
Eating is to me a matter of touching, smelling, tasting and seeing; all the senses are involved.	**0.439**	0.144	0.330	0.156	0.124	
Recipes and magazines articles from other cooking traditions make me experiment in the kitchen.	0.138	**0.763**	0.125	-0.039	0.034	**0.58**
I like to try new foods that I have never tasted before.	0.078	**0.712**	-0.059	0.077	0.147	
Shopping for food is like an entertainment	0.095	**0.647**	0.113	0.019	0.034	
Cooking is a task that is best over and done with.	0.059	-0.059	**-0.730**	0.290	0.001	**0.37**
To me product information is of high importance. I need to know what the product contains.	0.157	0.148	**0.637**	0.019	0.453	
Before I go shopping for food, I make a list of everything I need	0.177	-0.016	**0.598**	0.338	-0.162	
I make a point of using natural or ecological food products.	0.121	0.232	**0.456**	0.230	0.439	
I try to plan the amounts and types of food that the family consumes.	-0.047	0.346	**0.374**	0.301	0.209	
I only buy and eat foods which are familiar to me.	0.165	-0.038	0.054	**0.731**	0.001	**0.44**
I always check prices, even on small items.	-0.129	0.159	0.097	**0.604**	0.286	
I consider the kitchen to be the woman's domain.	-0.340	0.018	-0.348	**0.519**	-0.038	
When I do not really feel like cooking, I get one of the other members of my family to do it.	0.174	0.086	0.020	0.053	**0.748**	**0.47**
I like to buy food products in specialty stores where I can get expert advice.	0.232	0.388	0.151	0.255	**0.494**	

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization, rotation converged in 8 iterations
* Bold values indicate higher correlation between variables and factors
[1] Variables included in the PCA are expressed using 5-point scales.
n.a. = not applicable

Table 3. Categories of final clusters

	Cluster		
	1	**2**	**3**
	Foodie	**Conservative food consumer**	**Uninvolved food consumer**
Factor 1 Social life and sensory awareness	0.182	0.282	-0.618
Factor 2 Experimentation	0.231	-0.152	-0.083
Factor 3 Information on product purchased	0.646	-0.373	-0.307
Factor 4 Tradition	0.230	0.520	-1,005
Factor 5 Convenience and advice seeker	0.149	-0.074	-0.088
Factor 6 Snacks	-0.820	0.820	-0.140

The first segment is "foodie", which accounts for 35% of total sample. Foodie is highly interested in food from several aspects. They seek new food experiences rather than simply eating out of convenience or hunger. For them, eating experiences involve all sensations, e.g., seeing, tasting, smelling. Social togetherness over a meal is important for these consumers. They attach an importance to eating in restaurants or together with family, friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, consumers in this segment are far more interested in new products in relation to the other two segments. They have passion for cooking, and welcome innovation together with challenges, at the same time, food shopping is a delightful activity for them. Product information is deemed very important. This segment is mostly interested in ecology and nature as compared to other segments. They plan meals than other segments. Although they like food that they are familiar with, they like to experience new ones as well as recipes. They do not snack much in this segment. Food and related products are an important part of these consumers' lives, and are essential for social togetherness. This might explain their interesting-critical shopping behavior, which is characterized by a strong interest in product information and quality aspects, such as, ecology and nature.

The second segment accounts for 38% of total sample and is described as "conservative food consumers". These are serious committed housekeepers who are continuing to carry on their tradition. For them, food is essential for family and social gatherings. They are price sensitive, and attach tradition more than most. As a result, this segment is not interested in challenging or innovative cooking. New products or recipes are rated the least important, also in relation to the other two segments. Cooking is presumably the woman's job, since these consumers regard the kitchen as the woman's domain. Information on products purchased and quality attributes of products, such as, ecology and nature are given a lower priority. They snack the most in comparison to the other segments.

The third segment is described as "uninvolved food consumer", which accounts for 27% of total sample. For this group of consumers, food might be seen as fuel, meaning they are not interested in food more than just nutritional fulfilment. Food for them is not for social gathering. Eating out is of little importance to these consumers. This segment is not particularly interested in product information. They do not plan for shopping nor use shopping lists. They do not attach much importance to planning. In general, they are not interested in food shopping. Their interest in new products or recipes, specialty shop and snacks are on average. They are not interested in tradition as well. They are neither interested nor uninterested in cooking, as that task is regarded as women’s chores. In addition, they are not price conscious.

Profiling Kosovar Consumer Segments with Socio-demographic Variables

In order to understand where the differences between the segments lie and which classifying variables are significantly different between the groups, Kruskal-Wallis test, ANOVA and Tukey HSD post-hoc test were performed. The results revealed that all factors except for factor 2 (experimentation) could significantly differentiate the segments while it cannot explain the differences between segments on its own. Therefore, the relationships between identified segments and socio-demographic variables were also analyzed using the above-mentioned means.

Socio-demographic characteristics of each segment were not significantly different except the highest level of education. In terms of level of education, the strongest differences exist between Cluster 1 (foodie) and Cluster 3 (uninvolved food consumer). Average level of education in Cluster 1 is higher than Cluster 3. Around 54% of respondents in Cluster 1 hold university degree and 26% have high school diploma. In total, around 80% of respondents in Cluster 1 hold at least high school diploma while around 56% of respondent in Cluster 3 have, at least, graduated high school. In Cluster 2 (conservative food consumer), 79% of respondents hold at least high school diploma. Regarding other socio-demographic characteristics, Cluster 1 and 3 have slightly higher proportion of female (60% of total cluster) while Cluster 2 has balance proportion of genders. Average household size of respondents in Cluster 1 is five (5) members, slightly lower than Cluster 1 and 3 (six members). The average age (40 years old), income (501-800 euro/month) and monthly expenditure on food (around 300 euro/month) are indifferent.

Regarding shopping outlets for meat, respondents in Cluster 1 have significantly different preferred outlets from respondents in other Clusters. While respondents in Cluster 1 show significant higher preferences to purchase meat on farms than those who are in Cluster 3, they show significant lower preferences to purchase meat at supermarkets than those who are in Cluster 2.

To increase the usefulness of our segmentation results, the attitude of consumers toward Kosovar meat was tested among different consumer segments. Results suggest that although most respondents agreed that domestic meat (beef or chicken) is safer and is of high quality than imported beef, respondents in Cluster 1 are more convinced about it, while respondents in Cluster 3 have less negative opinion about quality of imported meat. This suggests that respondents in Cluster 1, or foodie, are the targeted consumers for Kosovar meat. These consumer groups also expressed their concerns about brand reputation and local origin as important characteristics of beef products in terms of food safety. They are more concerned about the origin of meat in comparison with others and they prefer to receive product information. Furthermore, in general, respondents are price conscious, but respondents in Cluster 3 are the least price conscious in comparison to respondents in other Clusters.

Discussion and Conclusions

Results suggest that consumers in Kosovo pay more attention to food safety and quality using expiration date, food safety certification, and origin as important cues, followed by trust on sellers as well as brand reputation. These results are in line with a previous study (Bytyqi et al. 2012). Furthermore, our study shows that Kosovar consumers perceive country of origin (COO), especially domestic origin as a sign of quality and safety for meat (beef and chicken meat). Kosovar consumers prefer domestic meat to EU origin and the one from outside EU, respectively. Based on surveyed consumer preferences, there is a good chance of domestic or local meat to get a premium price from the consumers. However, information regarding expiration date, food safety certification, and origin should be provided to assist consumer decision at the selling point. Specialized butchery is still the most preferred place to buy meat. This might contribute to the fact that consumers prefer to buy meat from the trusted place where they usually can develop relationship with the seller. However, due to the changing of urban consumers' life-style to the more fast-moving one, many consumers prefer to buy meat at supermarkets because it is more convenient and less time consuming as they can buy several other items besides food in supermarket.

Factor analysis sets out five components of FRL, defined as social life and sensory awareness, experimentation, information on product purchased, tradition, and convenience along with advice seeker. Using these five factors and an additional factor (snacks), we also identified three clusters: foodie, conservative food consumer and uninvolved food consumer. The three clusters identified can be used for the marketing of the product as well. In addition, we also found that the clusters identified using the FRL differ also in terms of attitudes towards Kosovar meat.

Foodies (Cluster 1) express their strong preference toward domestic meat; hence, they could be a suitable target for the value-enhancement of Kosovar meat. This is confirmed by the outcome that foodies prefer to buy meat on farms rather than at supermarkets, probably as a strategy to get genuine domestic meat. However, since they highly prefer to receive information regarding products and they are quite price consciousness. The issue of price and information provision could be envisioned as a part of strategy of Kosovar meat as well. On the other hand, uninvolved food consumer (Cluster 3) is more open to imported meat (although they also think that domestic meat is of higher quality than imported one). This might be because they do not think about food as an exciting product; as a result, they are not so much concerned about the information or origin, etc.

For farmers, processors and traders, our results suggest that there is a need for high food safety levels in the meat supply chain. Also, there is a potential market share for meat products bearing food safety and origin labels. Therefore, private sectors could use food safety labels to signal to consumers that products are safe trusted brands or labels, which could become some important tools to differentiate products as much as to enhance the competitiveness in the high-value market (Henson and Reardon, 2005). Safety control and labelling policies should be supported to achieve food safety targets and also to provide consumers with information in order to protect them from deception. Dissemination of information regarding food safety, certification and labels should be able to effectively reach consumers.

The main limitation of our study is that since we conducted this study using a reduced version of the FRL, its comparability with other studies that used the complete FRL is limited. Future research should analyze the FRL using the full version of the instrument and compare the results with the current study to see whether the results are consistent. In addition, one may argue that our results are inconsistent with the current situation, since Kosovo still has high imported meat consumption. However, our results show that Kosovar consumers show a "preference" for domestic meat over imported one and they refer to Kosovo's origin as a sign of safety as well as quality of meat. This suggests that if there were (enough) domestic meat available in the market, possibly with a price comparable to the imported one, there would be high probability that Kosovar consumers would choose domestic meat. Further, quantitative research would be necessary to go more in-depth into consumer demand and into the issues of food safety along with origin labelling.

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