



Challenges for Consumer Research and Consumer Policy in Europe

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Workshop 2: Horizons for European consumer research

Abstracts

Session 2.6: Climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials

Chair: Prof. Dr Wiltrud Terlau | Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and Founding Director of the International Centre for Sustainable Development (IZNE)

Rapporteur: Dr Darya Hirsch | Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences IZNE

Preparation methods of convenience food and their impact on energy consumption and consumer satisfaction

Dr Jasmin Geppert, S. Conin and Prof. Dr Rainer Stamminger (Bonn, Germany) | University of Bonn

Along with work and living conditions, nutritional behaviour of consumers has changed within the last decades. The main focus of food consumption patterns today is on dietary and health aspects as well as on convenience. This is the reason why convenience products have continuously been on the rise during the last years in Germany and other European countries. One of the fastest growing and most innovative food markets is the sector of chilled food comprising all food products that have to be stored at refrigeration temperatures of 8 °C or below. For consumers, a reduced workload with regard to food handling and food preparation and an assured success of the dishes may be seen as the main advantages of these products. At the same time, the products need to fulfil high sensory requirements to be successful in the long term.

The quality of a certain chilled food product is significantly influenced by the way it is reheated in domestic kitchens. There is a common advice to apply heating methods that affect sensory and nutritional aspects of the food as little as possible. Some of these methods are indicated on the packaging of a product. But the consumer does normally not know, which of these alternatives is the best with regard to sensory, nutritional and energetic aspects.

The objective of the present project was to investigate the impact of different heating methods of chilled food on sensory, nutritional values and energy consumption. By way of example, all investigations were carried out using carrot-potato stew as a chilled food product. Besides sensory tests and measurements of energy consumption, the content of β -carotenoids was analysed as an indicator for nutritive changes during the heating process. Following package cooking instructions, the stew was heated by using a hot water bath, a microwave and an oven.

The comparison of the different heating methods has revealed remarkable differences in nutritional and sensory aspects as well as in energy consumption. The most significant differences (up to 500 %) were observed concerning the energy consumption. To heat up one portion of the stew, between 76 Wh (microwave) and 398 Wh (oven) of energy was consumed. In view of these results and the importance of the topic on everyday life, it seems to be advisable to intensify the research in this field and to improve information for consumers.



How relevant is obsolescence – result of an empirical survey

Laura Hennies and Prof. Dr Rainer Stamminger (Bonn, Germany) | University of Bonn

A depreciation or aging process caused artificially is called planned obsolescence. This is often represented negatively for the consumer. The possibilities of the planned obsolescence are variously and for the consumer extremely non-transparent. Such obsolescence can be also sustainable if the expectations of the consumer are met.

An internet based survey was designed in which consumers were questioned about equipment they already disposed of. Five goods stood in the focus: Washing machine, notebook computer, water boiler, television set and hand stirring equipment. Inter alia, the life time of the goods and the reasons of replacing them were investigated. The data evaluation was carried out on an internet based interview portal in the time period from 12-1-2013 up to 4-6-2014. The interview was filled out by 1295 participants.

The evaluation is completed at present.

Climate change impacts on agriculture, food prices and consumer welfare: Evidence from Israel

Iddo Kan, Ayal Kimhi and Jonathan Kaminski (Jerusalem, Israel) | Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Having a reliable measure of the effects of climate change on agriculture and food prices is particularly important as governments and international organizations alike are called upon to revise current policies in order to adapt to climate change, and to integrate agricultural policies with a broader set of policies targeting sustainable development and natural resource management. Furthermore, taking food prices into consideration is extremely important given its relevance to the critical issues of poverty, food security and malnutrition around the world.

The purpose of this paper is to model and simulate the impact of climate change on agriculture, food prices and consumer welfare. Our modelling approach consists of three stages. First, we estimate farmers' response to climate change, in terms of crop portfolios, farmland allocation and quantities produced, using spatial climate variability. Second, we use the first stage results to derive aggregate supply of agricultural products, and interact it with a demand model to derive equilibrium food prices and quantities, from which we can compute consumer welfare. Finally, we simulate the model using climate change forecasts in order to obtain future food price and consumer welfare responses to climate change.

We estimate the model using Israeli data for the years 1990-2000 and simulate the impact of projected climate changes for the years 2000-2060. Simulation results show that consumer welfare is expected to decline as well, as food consumption declines while food prices rise. Quantitatively, over the 2000-2060 period, Israeli consumers are expected to lose welfare equivalent to 1.6 billion dollars due to the changes in food supply. In contrast, if free food imports were allowed, consumer welfare would not have changed, but the loss in agricultural profits would exceed 4 billion dollars.

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Contact | Consumer Association of North Rhine-Westphalia | Verbraucherzentrale NRW
Competence Center of Consumer Research North Rhine-Westphalia (CECORE NRW) | Kompetenzzentrum
Verbraucherforschung NRW (KVF NRW)
Dr Christian Bala, Mintropstrasse 27, D-40215 Düsseldorf, Germany, Fon: +49 211 38 09-350
E-Mail: verbraucherforschung@vz-nrw.de | Internet: www.verbraucherforschung-nrw.de | Twitter: [@kvf_nrw](https://twitter.com/kvf_nrw)

Conference Management | lab concepts GmbH on behalf of Verbraucherzentrale NRW
Fon: +49 228-24 98 118, Fax: +49 228-24 98 111, E-Mail: ICCR2014@lab-concepts.de

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