

Study of the importance of emotional factors connected to the colors of the fresh-cut cactus pear fruit in the consumer purchase choices for a marketing positioning strategy.

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The cactus pear has always aroused curiosity because of its shape and its particular structural characteristics (plate and spiny cladodes, oval fruits of different colors and flowers of an enchanting beauty). This plant evokes the territory where it grows, characterized by a sub-tropical climate, which in Europe is represented by the region of Sicily, the island of the Southern Italy, that is one of the main producers in the Mediterranean area. Sicily has three native cultivars with different colors of the fruit: red, yellow and white. The variety with the yellow fruit is the most widespread, although all of them are commercialized.

The chromatic variety of this fruits is one of the strengths of the product and it might be the main element of attraction for consumers. Starting from this assumption in this study it was measured the attractiveness for consumers of the colors of the cactus pear fruits into fresh-cut. It was investigated the unconscious emotional impulses that lead consumers to the desire of satisfaction of the underlying needs (instead than primary needs) that depend on the view of the color of the fruits. We investigated these secondary needs and also the connections with the typical elements of the territory of origin, which in this case is Sicily. These elements appear crucial for the positioning of the sicilian and mediterranean fresh-cut cactus pear in the consumers' market.

A sample of consumers was surveyed in some Countries of the European Union area, using a stratified sampling scheme. The data collected were processed through the application of multivariate statistics methods.

Taste and color were the main drivers for consumers to buy these products. Combination of fruits with different colors (red, yellow and white) were preferred to monochromatic: the red fruits appeared the more attractive only if presented together with other colors. Thanks to the use of evocative images and photos, it was possible to identify the hidden emotional needs of consumers related to cactus pear and its territory of production. A market segmentation, according to different types of consumers, different needs and geographic zones (geomarketing) was provided.

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