



THE SITUATION AND THE RECOMMENDED MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE APRICOT OF KECSKEMÉT IN HUNGARY

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Abstract:

Hungary will soon be a member of the EU. Those products that meet the strict requirements of the regulations related to origin protection or the certification system of traditional and unique characteristics can expect a more liberal regulation on the EU markets. Therefore an effort is made in the South Plain Region of Hungary, instead of the production of mass products, to place a greater emphasis on the industries that have a great history, the Hungarian participants of which possess internationally acknowledged professional skills and that produce excellent quality products. In our work we searched for an answer about how to increase the popularity and the market volume of the Hungaricums produced in the South Plain Region.

Keywords:

unique Hungarian product, arricot of Kecskemét, SWOT analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of globalisation the demand for traditional products is on the rise. This is why an effort is made in the South Plain Region to market special products specific to the region instead of the production of mass products. These unique products are competitive on the world market. We have chosen the SWOT analysis for the examination of the Hungaricums, which is supplemented with a self-evaluation. We are presenting a possible marketing strategy through the example of the apricot. Properly selected marketing tools can promote the growth of the popularity and the market volume of the Hungaricums produced in the South Plain Region.

In the advanced Western-European countries this process started at the end of the 1980s, during which consumer demand increased for the

multi-generation food products specific to the region and produced in a traditional way [2].

In the world of globalisation an increasing number of people recognise the need to market products having an extensive history that are specific to the region and which represent a great added value [6].

Hungary will soon be a member of the EU. Those products that meet the strict requirements of the regulations related to origin protection or the certification system of traditional and unique characteristics can expect a more liberal regulation on the EU markets [4].

Therefore an effort is made in the South Plain Region, instead of the production of mass products, to place a greater emphasis on the industries that have a great history, the Hungarian participants of which possess internationally acknowledged professional skills and that produce excellent quality products [7].

In our work we searched for an answer about how to increase the popularity and the market volume of the Hungaricums produced in the South Plain Region.

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUTH PLAIN REGION

The South Plain Region is the most expansive region of Hungary, occupying one-fifth of the country's territory. The population of 1,36 million living here comprises 13,4% of the total population of our country. The Region is situated in a flat area, and the most important treasure of the region is the soil. Due to its advantageous geographical features agriculture has traditionally played a significant role in the economy of the region.

The processing of local raw materials always meant a basic source of living for the people living here. The farming experience dating back for centuries produced high quality specialty products, Hungaricums, which represent the national treasures of the region. With the transformation of consumer trends the products with a guaranteed quality and a proven origin have become more important [5]. The climatic characteristics of the region, especially its microclimate, and the features of the small regions make the production of such unique specialty products that are competitive on the world market.

3. HUNGARICUMS IN THE SOUTH PLAIN REGION

In the small communities of the rural regions primarily agriculture offers employment opportunities. Today a high rate of unemployment exists in these regions. A permanent demand is present in the villages for part-time employment, as well. A way to employ the residents can be the production of specialty products, Hungaricums, with a high labour demand. The following are some of the most popular Hungaricums produced in the region: the apricot of Kecskemét, the juniper of Bugac, the watermelon of Medgyes, the onion of Makó, the ground paprika of Szeged and Kalocsa and the apricot brandy of Kecskemét. An effort is

made in the region to expand the range of traditional specialty products. The goal of the specific regions is to develop their own specialty products and to produce products of a perfect quality.

4. THE GENERAL SWOT ANALYSIS OF HUNGARICUMS

We have selected the SWOT analysis for the examination and the market position analysis of specific horticultural products, which is suitable for the mapping of the opportunities and the dangers related to the external environment, and can identify the weaknesses and the strengths with the examination of the internal conditions.

We have augmented the SWOT analysis with a self-evaluation. The self-evaluation is a carefully deliberated assessment, and its results provide an opinion or a judgement of the success and the efficiency of the organisation. We would like to demonstrate the general SWOT analysis of Hungaricums in the following table:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<i>The products listed have good and excellent characteristics and are delicious. Their quality exceeds that of the competing substitute products.</i>	<i>The integration is low in case of vegetable and fruit products.</i>
<i>The region has traditional growing and production processes.</i>	<i>The promotion activities are of a low quality. Liquidity problems exist, mainly for the small farmers.</i>
<i>Experience and professional skills in production, processing and occasionally in research are typical.</i>	<i>There is a lack of product brand development.</i>
<i>Quality is determined by the features of the production sites, the soil and the weather conditions.</i>	<i>The product revenues are not concentrated, therefore there are no funds for marketing promotion.</i>
<i>A latent demand exists for special, country-style food products both on the local and on the international markets.</i>	<i>The processing level of some specialty products is low.</i>
<i>Several products have their own event, and certain products even have other marketing tools.</i>	<i>Deficiencies exist in packaging and brand development, primarily in the fields of vegetable and fruit production.</i>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<i>The changes in consumer trends aid the introduction of the products on the market.</i>	<i>The consumers do not get familiar with and do not accept the product.</i>
<i>The demand can be increased by the introduction of modern packaging with distinguishing features identifying the origin.</i>	<i>Counterfeiting may worsen the general view on certain products.</i>
<i>The market can be influenced by integration and concentrated supply.</i>	<i>The profitability of product preparation does not increase.</i>
<i>The demand for the products can be increased by a prepared media package.</i>	<i>The threat that consumption trends having an opposite effect may result in the influx of import products (the specialties of foreign countries).</i>

Source: Chamber of Agriculture of Bács-Kiskun County [1]

We would like to demonstrate our observations through the example of the *apricot of Kecskemét*.

5. THE SITUATION AND THE RECOMMENDED MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE APRICOT OF KECSKEMÉT

In Kecskemét and in its vicinity – due to its advantageous soil and climate conditions – the production and the processing of apricot has a history dating back to several centuries. Several apricot varieties are grown in the region. The main traditional variety is the medium-early ripening Hungarian apricot. Due to frequent frost damages the yield varies extremely. The apricot of Kecskemét has earned fame primarily in the form of fresh products, brandy and jam. Its extensive processing possibilities enable the growth of the added value by also preserving its traditional style, its region-specific features and its uniqueness [3].

We have chosen the apricot, because the development of its Hungaricum-related production, processing and market position is related to the strategic agricultural and regional development programmes of Bács-Kiskun County.

The strengths and the unique features of the product. Due to the most optimal production area and climate in Europe the quality of the fruit is unequalled. The sugar (5-30%) and the acid content (0,3-2,6%) of the apricot produced in the Danube-Tisza interfluve is coupled with an intense flavour. A harmonious world of flavours comes with the higher than average dry matter content. Its high fibre content has advantageous dietary effects. The fresh fruit has a significant carotene content, and the potassium content of dried apricot is outstanding. Its consumption is healthy, it has a detoxifying effect, and its seed contains B13 and B15 vitamins. These are rare in other fruits. The fruit has an aesthetic appearance and is excellent for the decoration of cold cuts, fruit salads and desserts. Due to the harmonious composition of the flavour developed in the unique production area high quality processed foods are produced from it. It is consumed fresh, dried and preserved and in the form of purees, jams, pulps and juices. The value added depends on the type of processing. The apricot of Kecskemét owes its worldwide fame primarily to the brandy produced from the fruit, but the jam produced from it is also a Hungaricum. Their export has no quotas. This provides an opportunity for the advancement of the popularity and the differentiation of the product and for the strengthening of its market position.

A weakness of the product is that it can only be stored for a short period when fresh. Its flavour develops by the time it is ripe, but its transport at this time requires great care. The quantity of the yield fluctuates. Late frost damage represents the greatest risk. If the seed is used during the processing, it must not be forgotten that the seed pulp of some varieties contains toxic cyanide. During the sales activity the quality and the origin are not properly communicated to the consumer, therefore the packaging and the brand identification must be improved.

The emergence of foreign competition represents a threat. Apricot production takes place on a great area in Spain. Fruit picking starts at the end of June in Turkey and Greece. Due to its excellent quality the Turkish apricot is competitive on the puree market. A few years ago plumcot appeared on the world market as a substitute product. This fruit is a hybrid between plum and apricot which is exported by Chile in significant volumes.

After the assessment of the threats the opportunities must be identified, so that any possible advantages can be exploited against the competition. Due to the seasonal nature of the fresh product it enters the markets, the local food stores and the export markets in cases. The consumption can be increased with the modernisation of the packaging, origin identification and the application of differentiating marketing tools. It is important to organise regional events that attract attention, where the uniqueness, the traditional processing and Hungaricum nature must be emphasized. Information aimed at the consumer must be added to the fresh and the processed products.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The identification of the resources available to us, the search for newer resources, the elimination of threats and the expansion of relationships are among the basic tasks. It is very important to evaluate the external environmental effects. The opportunities we will actually realise and the threats we will be able to prevent are to be seen after our internal resources are revealed. Generally it is practical to repeat the SWOT analysis every 2-3 years, or more frequently as needed, and to compare it to the previous examination results. Specific tasks:

- To increase the popularity and the market revenues of the Hungaricums noted, and to simultaneously enhance the situation of the producers and the processors associated with the products.
- The processing of the products by preserving the Hungaricum nature to increase the added value that is recognised on the market.
- The application of well-selected marketing tools helps in the development of the regional and the national „image”. The Hungaricum products are not well marketable on their own, but together with the appropriate „historical and cultural background”. The consumer in this case does not purchase merely a product – products are available anywhere – but also flavours, aromas and traditions.

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