

Magdalena Tańska
Akademia Pomorska w Słupsku

Ewa Babicz-Zielińska
Akademia Morska w Gdyni

Agnes Chaillot
Psycho-Dietician Consulting, Inc., London, Great Britain

Attitudes of elderly people towards new and unfamiliar food

Summary

Poland has been experiencing a process of demographic changes with an increasing number of ageing people constituting its population. During the late stages of life, one can observe many health conditions occurring among this age group, which are also related to diets. The economic situation is not always the reason; it is often a reluctance to change dietary habits, fear of the unfamiliar, or preference for the traditional dietary model. Neophobic behaviours contribute to persisting in taking unadventurous food choices, limiting the variety and resulting in dietary monotony and nutritional deficiencies.

The aim of the study was to assess the attitudes of older adults towards novel, unfamiliar food and to identify sources of knowledge about healthy diets. The study was conducted among 596 members of the University of the Third Age from Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie provinces with a varied social and demographic profile. In order to determine the degree of neophobia, a modified Food Neophobia Scale was employed. Respondents were also asked to identify the most significant sources of knowledge about food.

Over half of the group declared an indifferent attitude towards novel, unfamiliar food, and a third of all the respondents was negatively biased. The most substantial factors affecting the degree of neophobia have been: financial situation, and working life of the older adults. Acquaintances, friends and popular science magazines have been indicated as sources of knowledge about healthy diets.

It is likely that reluctance to consume new and unfamiliar food by older adults is influenced by the dietary habits formed over their lifetime. Fears connected with new food result from lack of elementary knowledge of the subject. The elderly consumers are a segment of the market that should be targeted at with promotional campaigns of new products, particularly those having healthful properties.

Key words: attitudes, food neophobia, elderly people, novel food.

JEL codes: D11, D12

Introduction

The substantial increase in human life is observed at a world scale. The advancement of human life is caused by a variety of reasons like as an improvement of living conditions,

medical achievements, a change of lifestyle towards healthier one following a decrease in birthrate, an increase in prosperity and a quality of human life. The increasing prosperity results in easier access to medical care, an increase in level and range of social security, which altogether favours the increasing life quality, and efforts of national and international organisations for support and social activity of elderly people (Steuden 2012).

The ageing is a serious challenge for researchers and society. As shown by all scenarios, the number of elderly people will be progressively increasing in near future. According to the Main Statistical Office, in 2010 the average life length was 71.2 yrs. for men and 80.6 yrs. for women. The appearing prognoses estimate that the life length increases to 82 yrs. for men and 88 yrs. for women till 2050 (GUS 2011; GUS 2015). Nowadays, every fourth person belongs to the advanced old age group, above 75 yrs. (Sygit 2010) and in 2050 more than a half of people will be older than 50 yrs. (GUS 2015). The society ageing and lengthening of human life, characteristic of developed countries, has a lot of reasons.

The research of consumer attitudes permits to predict the future nutritional behaviour. According to the attitude definition, it is an intrinsic, affective orientation, which explains the human behaviour (Reber, Reber 2001). According to (Narojek 1993), the attitude applies to many different problems related to the nutrition of a person and a family. At old age, a number of health problems appear, which are associated with eating. It is often a result of an existence of aversion to change the nutritional behaviour, fear of the unknown and preference of traditional nutritional model. The reflection of an attitude against the novelty of anything is the neophobia level. The attitudes towards the unknown may be different and their extreme form is defined as neophobia (negative attitude) and neophilia (positive attitude). The novel, unfamiliar food may provoke fear because of imagined sensory attributes (e.g. bad taste), an influence on health or an origin (Nordin et al. 2004; Martins, Pliner 2005). The neophobic behaviour may result in a reducing of consumption of various foods and, as consequence, in nutrition monotony and insufficiency of various nutrients. The neophobic person represents a more negative attitude towards food, evaluates worse the expected and actual taste as a pleasure source, less can smell food than a person demonstrating the food neophilia (Jeżewska-Zychowicz i in. 2009).

The objective of the here made research was an assessment of attitudes of elderly people towards novel, unfamiliar food when taking into account the knowledge on healthy eating.

Material and research methods

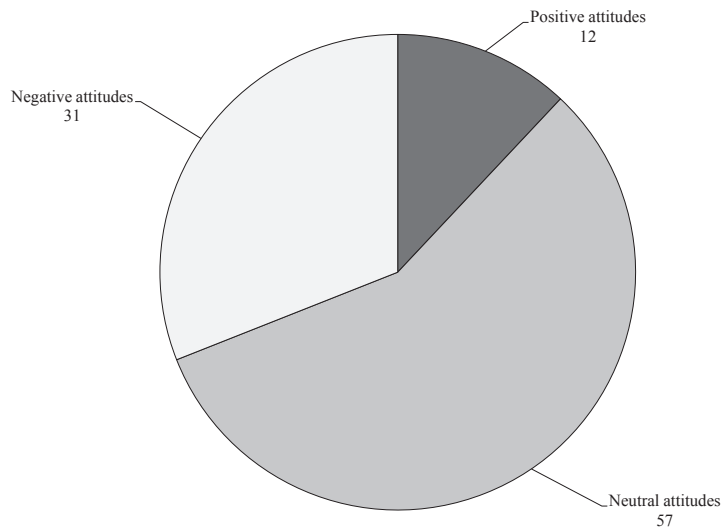
The research on food neophobia was performed among 596 participants of the Third Age University at Pomeranian and West Pomeranian counties, of the differentiated socio-demographic profile. A non-probabilistic sampling of surveyed consumers was applied. Women counted 82% of the sample, and the persons aged above 70 yrs. – 53%. The 36% of consumers possessed secondary education, 27% – education, 24% – vocational education, 13% – higher education. The subjects assessed their financial situation mostly as an average one. 82% of subjects were inactive (mostly retired).

In order to assess the food neophobia level, the modified Food Neophobia Scale (Pliner, Hobden 1992) was applied. It included the statements imagined the negative attitudes (I prefer to eat familiar foods; I am afraid of taking the unfamiliar foods etc.) and positive attitudes (when being out of home, I take the strangest dishes even I am not sure whether I like them; when preparing new meals, I like trying new recipes; I like exotic foods etc.). Each subject was asked to express his/her attitude to particular statement on the 5 point Likert scale with end markings from “I fully agree” (1) to “I fully disagree” (5), passing through the neutral point (3). The ANOVA statistical treatment was applied to estimate the significance of particular results.

Research results

The positive attitudes towards novel, unfamiliar foods were expressed by a small fraction of subjects and the negative attitudes as much as one-third of the sample. Above half of subjects declared neutral attitudes (Fig. 1).

Figure 1
Attitudes of subjects towards novel, unfamiliar foods (%)



Source: own preparation.

The attitudes of subjects towards FNS statements are shown in Table 1. 82% of subjects declared the desired to eat only familiar foods, but simultaneously 57% gladly attempted new products. Only 18% took a novel, unfamiliar meals when eating outside the home. One might conclude that elderly people like to test new receipts, but with familiar ingredients,

More than a half of subjects stated that they liked exotic meals, and the similar number demonstrated a fear of eating unfamiliar foods. The neutral and negative attitudes of elderly people towards novel, unfamiliar meals may result from a lack of knowledge on new generation food. According to Dąbrowska et al. (2011) only 28% of subjects aged more than 60 yrs. stated that they knew the new generation food.

Table 1
Attitudes of subject towards novel, unfamiliar food (%)

Statement	Yes or rather yes	Neither yes nor not	No or rather not
When eating outside home, I choose the strangest dish, even I am unsure whether I like it	18	14	68
When preparing the meals, I like attempting new recipes	57	17	26
I like eating exotic meals	23	23	54
I prefer take foods, which I am familiar with	82	8	10
I fear about taking meals, which I am not familiar with	54	19	27

Source: own preparation.

The effects of socio-demographic features on the attitudes of subjects is illustrated in Table 2. The gender had no significant influence: more women (33%) than men (29%) demonstrated negative attitudes. The age was also no important variable: positive attitudes towards novel food were observed mainly among persons 61-70. yrs. old, and mostly negative attitudes – above 70. yrs of age. The neutral attitudes were declared mainly subjects aged at 51-60. yrs.

The study showed the significant difference in attitudes towards unfamiliar foods as related to the financial situation and professional activity of subjects. The influence of those two factors on neophobia level has been already confirmed by the research of Babicz-Zielinska et al. (2013). The positive attitudes towards unfamiliar foods were mainly declared by subjects assessed their financial situation as very bad (40%). The subjects evaluating their financial situation as very good, average or rather bad presented rather negative attitudes. The professionally active respondents demonstrated more positive attitudes. In an earlier study of Jeżewska-Zychowicz et al. (2009) the significantly lower neophobia level was also noticed in such group.

The performed study showed that negative attitudes towards novel food were observed among persons with basic education (65%). A similar trend was observed in research of Jeżewska-Zychowicz et al. (2009); an increasing education resulted in decreasing the fraction of people expressing high neophobia level, with an exception of people with basic education.

The subjects were also asked about the source of knowledge about healthy nutrition. The most important knowledge sources are listed in Table 3.

Table 2**Attitudes of subject as related to chosen socio-demographic features (%)**

Feature	Attitudes			Significant difference
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	
Gender				p=0.2100
Female	33	55	12	
Male	29	56	15	
Age				p=0.1040
50-60 yrs.	22	70	8	
61-70 yrs.	30	55	15	
Above 70 yrs.	42	49	9	
Education				p=0,2900
Primary	65	32	3	
Vocational	23	56	21	
Secondary	32	58	10	
Higher	30	55	15	
Financial situation				p=0,0010*
Very good	33	48	19	
Moderate	32	56	12	
Rather bad	42	58	0	
Very bad	0,0	60	40	
Professional activity				p=0,0130*
active	23	64	13	
inactive	35	53	12	
Overall	31	57	12	

* Statistically Significant Correlation.
Source: like in Table 1.

The highest fraction of subjects reported the friends as a knowledge source (57%), next – popular guides and professional literature. The Internet as a source of knowledge about nutrition was mainly mentioned by women (29%), persons 61-70 yrs. old (23%), subjects possessing secondary education (2%), at the moderate financial situation (29%) and professionally inactive (28%). Bronkowska et al. (2009) also reported that for half of subjects the main knowledge source about proper nutrition were books and popular guides. The remaining respondents answered that such knowledge was appropriated from culinary traditions of the family house.

Table 3**Sources of knowledge about healthy nutrition as related to chosen socio-demographic features (%)**

Feature	Popular guides	Professional literature	Physician	Dietician	Friends	Internet
Gender						
Females	43	46	30	11	48	29
Males	10	8	9	4	9	6
Age						
50-60 yrs. old	7	8	6	3	9	5
61-70 yrs. old	30	28	17	8	29	23
Above 70 yrs.	15	16	15	3	18	5
Education						
Primary	1	2	4	1	4	2
Vocational	3	3	4	2	4	1
Secondary	27	29	18	9	29	21
Higher	22	21	14	4	20	12
Financial situation						
Very good	5	5	4	2	5	4
Moderate	44	44	31	12	47	29
Rather bad	2	3	4	1	4	1
Very bad	1	1	1	0	1	1
Professional activity						
Active	12	14	10	5	15	7
Inactive	41	40	30	10	42	28
Overall	53	53	39	15	57	35

Source: like in Table 1.

Summary

The elderly persons demonstrate mainly neutral and negative attitudes towards the unfamiliar foods. The financial situation and professional activity differentiate the attitudes. The reluctance to take the novel food by elderly persons may be resulted from already shaped food habits, fear against changes, apprehension to novelties in the food market, low knowledge about food and nutrition, beliefs in stereotypes.

It may be assumed that fears about novel food are associated with insufficient knowledge of new products. Elderly people constitute such market segment, to which the actions promoting novel products can be addressed, in particular, pro-healthy products. For food manufacturers, elderly people may constitute the important part of the demand for products offered by them.

Bibliography

- Babicz-Zielińska E., Jeżewska-Zychowicz M., Tańska M. (2013), *Neofobia a zachowanie konsumenta na rynku nowej żywności*, „Handel Wewnętrzny”, nr 1.
- Bronkowska M., Martynowicz H., Żmich K., Szuba A., Biernat J. (2009), *Wybrane elementy stylu życia oraz wiedza żywieniowa otyłych osób z rozpoznany nadciśnieniem tętniczym*, „Arterial Hypertension”, Vol. 13(4).
- Dąbrowska A., Babicz-Zielińska E. (2011), *Zachowania konsumentów w stosunku do żywności nowej generacji*, „Hygeia Public Health”, No. 46(1).
- GUS (2011), *Trwanie życia w 2010 roku*, Warszawa.
- GUS (2015), *Prognozy ludności na lata 2014-2050*, Warszawa.
- Jeżewska-Zychowicz M., Babicz-Zielińska E., Laskowski W. (2009), *Konsument na rynku nowej żywności*, Wydawnictwo SGGW, Warszawa.
- Martins Y., Pliner P. (2005), *Human food choices: An examination of the factors underlying acceptance/rejection of novel and familiar animal and nonanimal foods*, „Appetite”, No. 45.
- Narojek L. (1993), *Niektóre aspekty uwarunkowań zachowań żywieniowych*, Instytut Żywności i Żywnienia, Warszawa.
- Nordin S., Broman D.A., Garvil J., Nyroos M. (2004), *Gender differences affecting rejection of food in healthy young Swedish adults*, „Appetite”, No. 43.
- Pliner P., Hobden K. (1992), *Development of food neophobia in humans*, „Appetite”, No. 19.
- Reber A.S., Reber E. (2001), *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, Penguin Books, London.
- Studen S. (2012), *Psychologia starzenia się i starości*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Sygit M. (2010), *Zdrowie publiczne*, Wydawnictwo Oficyna, Warszawa.

Postawy ludzi starszych względem nowej, nieznannej żywności

Streszczenie

W Polsce obserwuje się proces zmian demograficznych, który charakteryzuje się rosnącym udziałem osób starszych w ogólnej populacji. W wieku starszym występuje wiele problemów zdrowotnych związanych z odżywianiem. Nie zawsze przyczyną jest zła sytuacja ekonomiczna; często jest to wynik niechęci do zmiany nawyków żywieniowych, lęku przed nieznanym oraz preferowanie tradycyjnego modelu żywienia. Zachowania neofobiczne przyczyniają się do ograniczania spożycia różnorodnej żywności, co w konsekwencji może prowadzić do monotonii żywieniowej i niedoborów składników odżywczych.

Celem przeprowadzonych badań była ocena postaw ludzi starszych w stosunku do nowej, nieznannej żywności oraz identyfikacja źródeł wiedzy na temat zdrowego odżywiania. Badania przeprowadzono wśród 596 słuchaczy Uniwersytetu Trzeciego Wieku województw pomorskiego i zachodniopomorskiego o zróżnicowanym profilu socjodemograficznym. Do oceny poziomu neofobii zastosowano zmodyfikowaną skalę neofobii żywieniowej. Respondentów pytano również o wskazanie najważniejszych źródeł wiedzy o żywieniu.

Ponad połowa badanych respondentów deklarowała postawę obojętną wobec nowej, nieznannej żywności, a jedna trzecia – postawę negatywną. Na poziom neofobii w największym stopniu wpływały: sytuacja materialna i aktywność zawodo-

wa ludzi starszych. Jako źródło wiedzy na temat zdrowego odżywiania wskazywano znajomych oraz poradniki popularnonaukowe.

Niechęć do spożywania nowej żywności przez osoby starsze może być spowodowana ukształtowanymi nawykami żywieniowymi. Obawy związane z nową żywnością wiążą się głównie z brakiem podstawowej wiedzy w tym zakresie. Starsi konsumenci to segment rynku, do którego powinny być kierowane akcje promujące nowe produkty, zwłaszcza o właściwościach prozdrowotnych.

Słowa kluczowe: postawy, neofobia żywieniowa, osoby starsze, nowa żywność.

Kody JEL: D11, D12

Отношение пожилых людей к новым, неизвестным пищевым продуктам

Резюме

В Польше наблюдается процесс демографических изменений, который характеризуется повышающейся долей пожилых людей в общей популяции. В пожилом возрасте выступает много проблем со здоровьем, связанных с питанием. Не всегда причина этого – плохое экономическое положение; часто это результат неохоты менять навыки питания, страха перед неизвестным и предпочтение традиционной модели питания. Неофобическое поведение ведет к ограничению потребления разнообразных пищевых продуктов, что в итоге может вести к питательной монотонии и нехватке питательных веществ.

Целью проведенных обследований была оценка отношения людей пожилого возраста к новым, неизвестным пищевым продуктам, а также выявление источников знаний о здоровом питании. Обследования провели среди 596 слушателей Университета третьего возраста Поморского и Западнопоморского воеводств с дифференцированным социально-демографическим профилем. Для оценки уровня неофобии применили модифицированную шкалу пищевой неофобии. Респондентов попросили также указать основные источники знаний насчет питания.

Более половины опрошенных респондентов декларировали нейтральное отношение к новым, неизвестным пищевым продуктам, а одна треть – отрицательное. На уровень неофобии в самой большой степени повлияли материальное положение и профессиональная активность пожилых людей. В качестве источника знаний насчет здорового питания указывали знакомых и популярно-научные справочники.

Неохота потреблять новые продукты питания пожилыми людьми может быть вызвана сформировавшимися питательными навыками. Опасения, связанные с новыми пищевыми продуктами, связаны в основном с отсутствием основных знаний в этом отношении. Пожилые потребители – сегмент рынка, на который должны быть направлены акции по продвижению новых продуктов, в особенности с оздоровительными свойствами.

Ключевые слова: отношение, пищевая неофобия, пожилые люди, новые пищевые продукты.

Коды JEL: D11, D12

Artykuł nadesłany do redakcji we wrześniu 2016 roku

© All rights reserved

Afiliacja:

prof. dr hab. inż. Ewa Babicz-Zielińska

Akademia Morska w Gdyni

Wydział Przedsiębiorczości i Towaroznawstwa

Katedra Handlu i Usług

ul. Morska 83

81-225 Gdynia

e-mail: e.babicz-zielinska@wpit.am.gdynia.pl