

Studying Customers' Satisfaction with Light Food Products. A Social Network Based Survey in Greece

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Abstract: *This empirical study looks into the growing trend of light food products and investigates the drivers of customer satisfaction with the former type of products. While customer satisfaction has been extensively studied in the literature by employing conventional surveys, this study takes advantage of the social networks' phenomenal growth to determine empirically the link between customers' satisfaction and its drivers. Evidence was generated on-line from a sample of 210 respondents drawn among Greek users of the most popular social network, namely Facebook. By doing so, this paper explores the potentials of social networks in customer satisfaction surveys and on-line market data collection. Besides the methodological contribution of the study, the findings suggest that customer satisfaction is not necessarily driven by the social/psychological value of a given light product purchased; instead, it is the perceived product quality, the value for money and the likely time/effort benefits associated with a purchase, that matter most. The findings facilitate managerial understanding of the consumers' perspective and help firms become more competitive by placing greater emphasis on utilitarian (rather than social/psychological) values consumers seem to focus on, in this market.*

Keywords: *Light food products, customer satisfaction surveys, social networks, on-line surveys, perceived value, Facebook.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of customer satisfaction has attracted much attention in the marketing literature (for more, see section 2.1). This is largely due to the fact that customer satisfaction has been considered as one of the most important goals for an organization (Straus and Neuhaus, 1997), the achievement of which remains a prerequisite for financial success (Chi and Gursoy, 2009). While customer satisfaction could be described as reflecting the difference between a customer's expectation prior to consumption of a good (or service) and his/her perception after the consumption experience has taken place, capturing satisfaction has become of paramount importance for firms, nowadays. Indeed, the changes occurring in the economy along with fluctuations in the disposable income and the increasing variety of food products (and services) offered to the modern consumer, affect buyers' behavior and criteria (Zakowska-Biemans, 2011). More specifically, consumers tend to become more selective in their choices, trying to ideally maximize their satisfaction and utility from purchases made (Choudhury, 2011). Having acknowledged that highly satisfied customers may well turn into loyal customers (Giese and Cote, 2000), companies strive to remain competitive in the increasingly competitive context described above, by offering a greater amount of desirable features in their products/services so as to maintain or even gain more customers (Demiris et al., 2005). Furthermore, companies try to understand and capture customer satisfaction by undertaking regularly, customer satisfaction surveys (Jones and Sasser, 1995). Despite that such surveys have been criticized in the literature (e.g. see Heskett et al., 1994; Reicheld, 1996), they are useful in terms of helping firms understand their markets and the particular product/service attributes their customers prefer (Jones and Sasser, 1995), measure and foresee likely market shifts, compare different business units' performance and measure quality improvement effects (Kordupleski et al., 1993). The information obtained by customer satisfaction surveys is believed to facilitate managerial decision making and contribute to more effective marketing decisions/policies (Chien et al., 2003). This applies also in the food industry including the growing market of light food products.

Regarding the foregoing sector of light foods, it is reminded that it constitutes one of the emerging and growing sectors in the food industry, worldwide. The light food category first appeared in the 1970s and consumption of such products has been rapidly growing ever since. Acknowledging that a product must have at least 30% less calories of the corresponding full fat to enter the category of light foods, such goods now days seem to capture a continually growing share of the Greek market as the constant increase in product variety offered at the super market shelves suggests. Specifically, 2 out of 10 consumers in Greece already buy light dairy products, while light version of soft drinks, meats, sweets (ice creams) and alcoholic beverages earn subsequently more ground (EIEP, 2011). The reasons become clear if one considers that increasing numbers of Greek men, women and children are becoming obese; even Crete, the focal point of the so called Mediterranean diet is proclaimed to be the region with the highest obesity rates in Europe (EPIC,

2011) while surveys suggest high child obesity in Thessaly, too (Iatrikostypos, 2011). One conclusion to be reached from these alarming findings is that the light foods' growth could be attributed to the recent rising obesity levels in the population and the consumers' desire to lose weight, which acts as an incentive.

Light food products' increasing demand has been studied in various countries such as Lithuania (see Kriaucioniene et al. 2009), Ireland (see Bogue et al, 1999) and Belgium (see Viaene, 1997). Although such foods have become popular, there is very limited relevant evidence from the Greek context. Against the above background, this paper focuses on conducting a customer satisfaction-related survey to investigate consumers' attitudes towards light food products by using social networks in Greece. Specifically, this study seeks to generate empirical evidence on: (1) the determinants of customer satisfaction with light foods by linking customer satisfaction to the perceived value for money offered, the quality of light foods purchased, the psychological value and the time/effort related benefits associated with a given purchase; (2) the role of certain consumer (profile) characteristics on the relationship between consumers' perceived value and satisfaction with light foods. Last but not least, this study aspires to (3) explore the potentials of social networks such as Facebook (see Theodorakis, 2009; Boyd and Ellison, 2007) in customer satisfaction surveys and in fact, whether the proposed method affects the rate and quality of the responses achieved on-line. To serve the foregoing objectives, a survey was undertaken among Greek users of the most popular social network, namely Facebook while the response rate and data quality achieved, highlight how useful this modern means of on-line data collection can be for market research. In addition to its methodological contribution, this paper contributes by shedding more light into the link between customers' satisfaction and its drivers in the light food sector. The findings underscore how important utilitarian values are as drivers of customer satisfaction thereby facilitating managerial understanding of (at least, some part) of the Greek consumers' perspective and helping firms become more competitive in this light food market served.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Customer satisfaction

The following review of the literature pertains to the customer satisfaction construct (this study's dependent variable) and the notion of perceived value, entailing the independent variables of this study (see Figure 1 below). Customer satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that has long been a favorable topic in the marketing literature where researchers placed much emphasis on the operationalization of the construct per se and the antecedents of customer satisfaction (e.g. see Giese and Cote, 2000; Fornell et al, 1996; Spreng et al., 1996; Smith et al, 1996; Adreassen, 1995; Wirtz, 1993; Tse and Wilson, 1988; Cadotte et al., 1987; Woodruff et al, 1983; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1981). Customer satisfaction can be defined as "a customer's overall evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations" (Hong-Youl et al. 2011, p.676). It refers to a reaction (either emotional or cognitive) to a given product/service involving the consumer's expectation from that product and the consumption experience with that product; this reaction takes place immediately after choosing or after consuming the product or it is based on past consumption experience, too (Cote and Giese, 2000). This is in line with Oliver, (1997) who perceives customer satisfaction as a consumer's fulfillment response which is essentially a judgment that a product/service provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment including levels of over- or under-fulfillment. Yet, customer expectations cannot be always fulfilled particularly in cases where customers may feel satisfied with one product feature and simultaneously, dissatisfied with another product feature (of the same product), the difference of which, is not necessarily negligible (Oliver 1997). In this context, it is worth mentioning the customers' tolerance zone that provides a service performance interval within which customer expectations are fulfilled; performance outside the tolerance zone has a serious impact on customers' satisfaction (Woodruff et al., 1983). While customer satisfaction is considered to reflect the true meaning of present economic activities (Chien et al., 2003), its importance for firms derives mainly from the fact that satisfaction tends to increase customers' loyalty and resistance to competitors' products, reduce customer acquisition and transaction costs as well as trigger positive word of mouth that is vital for a firm's reputation (Bayraktar, et al., 2011). Moreover, it has been linked to customer loyalty because highly satisfied customers often exhibit repetitive purchasing behavior and are more predictable (Martin et al., 2007; Moliner et al., 2007). Firms need to keep customers very satisfied and not simply content to maintain loyalty (Bowen and Chen, 2001). Yet, there are cases where satisfaction and loyalty are not necessarily related (Chen and Tsai, 2008) and repeated purchasing does not always mean the customer is loyal (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). For instance, due to store proximity, customers may create long term relationships with a specific store and appear to be satisfied with and loyal to brands available there (Meyer-Waarden, 2007); similarly, a lack of options offered may force the customer to repeat a buying pattern and appear to be loyal without being one (Moliner, 2007). To remain competitive, it is important for firms to identify first, the customers' perceptions of value for (or the key drivers of satisfaction with) a given product.

2.2 Perceived value

According to Zeithaml (1988, p.14) "perceived value is consumers' overall assessment of the utility of a product or service based on their perceptions of what is received versus what is given". A consumer's purchase of any given good, aims to satisfy functional and/or non-functional needs reflecting different shopping values (mainly, utilitarian and hedonic values) associated with a purchase made (Babin et al., 1994). Utilitarian values assume that customers are rational problem solvers and are considered instrumental and extrinsic, referring to such attributes as economical saving and convenience (Rintamaki et al., 2006). In contrast, hedonic values are more abstract and subjective, relating to

emotional and/or self-realization issues (Rintamaki et al., 2006; Babin et al., 1994; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). For example, the utilitarian values of a fast food customer can be linked to reasonable pricing and quick service, while hedonic values include an emphasis on employee kindness, mood and food taste (see Park, 2004). The perceived value plays an important role in consumers' decision making and willingness to proceed to a product's purchase (Chi and Kilduff, 2011; Grewal et al., 1998). Perceived value was found to positively influence customers' satisfaction and loyalty (Gallarza and Saura, 2006) as well as purchase intention in the service sector (Cronin et al., 1997). In line with Kuo et al. (2009, p.888) arguing that "customer's perceived value can be defined from the perspectives of money, quality, benefit and social psychology", this study adopts four dimensions of perceived value:

- *Perceived value for money.*

Consumers tend to assess the value of a product/service by comparing the elements/features offered relative to the acquisition costs (Oliver, 1997). Perceived value for money is an indicator of how a consumer evaluates the value of a product relative to the price paid (Wu et al., 2011). For instance, between two products sharing the same price, the greatest value for money is offered by the one having the most advantageous features relative to the other product that has inferior cues (Richardson et al., 1996). Value for money is also linked to price sensitivity reflecting the degree to which one is willing (or unwilling) to refrain from buying a product whose price is considered unacceptably high (Munnukka, 2008). Value for money was found to have a strong impact on consumers' behavioral intentions (Williams and Soutar, 2009) including intentions to purchase products (Dodds et al., 1991) and services (Cronin et al., 2000). In addition, there is a positive relationship between customers' price perceptions and satisfaction; more specifically, value for money is claimed to have a strong impact on customer satisfaction (Munnukka, 2008) and loyalty across various branded and private label goods (e.g. see Anselmsson and Johansson, 2009; Lin and Wang, 2006; Sirohi et al., 1998).

- *Perceived quality.*

Quality is multi-dimensional capturing all product attributes and features responsible for satisfying user needs (Mendez et al., 2008) and a key criterion based on which products/services are evaluated (Baltas and Argouslidis, 2006). During the product evaluation process, quality and satisfaction are considered to be sides of the same coin (Dabholkar and Thorpe, 1994). In fact, Oliver (1997) regards satisfaction in terms of reflecting a wider evaluation and quality as reflecting one part of it only while Parasuraman et al., (1988) look at quality and satisfaction from a time perspective, where quality is viewed as a long-term evaluation and satisfaction as a short-term one. The public's perceptions of product quality and food safety concerns characterise the food industry in general and food scandals coupled with genetic food modification, ethical considerations and perceptions that light foods may cause health problems suggest the main obstacles to the light food products' growth (Brunso et al., 2002). However, when quality is perceived to be superior, it is less likely to encourage switching behavior among customers (Deng et al., 2010). Perceived quality "can be defined as the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority" (Zeithaml, 1988, p.3) and it is claimed to strongly influence consumers' purchase intention (Sprott and Shimp, 2004; Cronin et al., 2000; Richardson et al., 1994). When the consumption experience meets customer expectations of quality, then perceptions formed act as an incentive towards maintaining similar purchase behaviors (Cater and Cater, 2010) which explains why quality has been linked to customer satisfaction and/or loyalty (e.g. see Deng et al., 2010; Fornell et al., 1996; Iacobucci et al., 1995).

- *Perceived value in terms of time/effort benefits.*

When referring to the perceived value from the benefit perspective, then value reflects the overall sacrifices a customer makes besides money (e.g. purchase time, transaction costs, search costs) in order to receive the benefits of a product (McDougall and Levesque, 2010). In other words, product value derives from the difference between the benefits obtained by product attributes relative to the total costs (Caruana and Ewing, 2010). For example, convenience is considered an important benefit reflecting the consumers' attitudes towards saving time and effort related to planning, buying and/or using products (Berry et al., 2002). According to Kelley, (1958), convenience costs include the expenditure of time, physical and nervous energy and money required to overcome the frictions of space and time so as to obtain possession of goods and services. Convenience is considered to be very important for consumers since time is non-renewable and effort depletable (Berry et al., 2002). When consumers consider the convenience costs to be minimal then they may decide to proceed to a purchase of a product/service. Perceived value in terms of benefits received and sacrifices made is found to be an antecedent to customer loyalty (Moliner, 2007; Chen and Tsai, 2008), while convenience is also found to influence the customers' satisfaction with a product purchased (Berry et al., 2002).

- *Perceived social/psychological value*

In addition (and related to the notion of value mentioned), consumers tend to be influenced by their social environment regarding the products purchased (Oliver and Lee, 2010). Indeed, other people's reaction to (or opinion about) the brand bought can be quite important to them (Keller, 2001); in fact, consumers do not base always their buying decisions solely on personal needs criteria but often indulge in buying behaviors influenced by their friends, family, neighbors, colleagues and opinion leaders (Oliver and Lee, 2010). Psychological benefit refers to the enhancement of the social self-concept while social value is the utility derived from a product's ability to improve one's perceived social self-concept (Sweeny and Soutar, 2001). Along the same lines, Moliner et al. (2007, p. 139), argue that the social dimension depicts the "value" generated from the social image transmitted by the use of the product or service". In this context, Baltas (1997) claims that national brands are considered to be socially acceptable. Likewise, Del Vecchio (2001) states that branded products are perceived as products whose strong brand conveys the product's social value to the buyer (or owner) suggesting that the perceived social value may well drive purchase intentions (Chi and Kilduff, 2011) as well as customers' satisfaction (Sweeny and Soutar, 2001) and loyalty (Moliner et al., 2007).

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The proposed conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 depicts the impact the independent variables namely, perceived value for money, perceived quality, social/psychological value and value in terms of time effort/benefits are likely to have on the dependent variable of this study, namely, customers' satisfaction with light food products. Based on the review of the literature and the discussion made in sections 2.1 and 2.2, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The greater the perceived value for money a light food product offers, the greater the customer satisfaction is expected to be.

H2: The greater the perceived product quality a light food offers, the greater the customer satisfaction is expected to be.

H3: The greater the perceived value in terms of time/effort benefits a light food product offers, the greater the customer satisfaction is expected to be.

H4: The greater the perceived social/psychological value a light food product offers, the greater the customer satisfaction is expected to be.

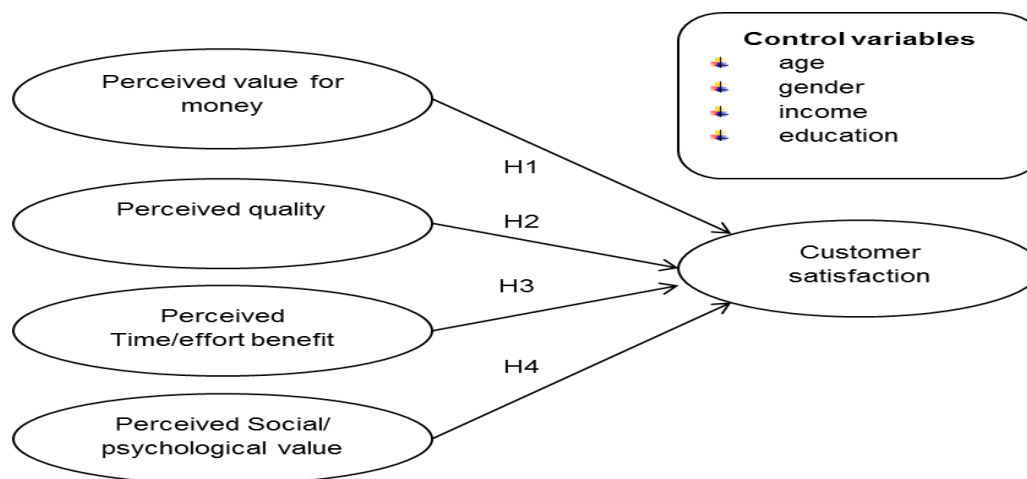


Figure 1. Determinants of customer satisfaction with light food products.

While Keillor et al., (2001) argue that different demographic characteristics could influence consumer preferences, Cleveland et al.'s (2011) findings where younger people appear to be more innovative, less risk averse in terms of trying new products and more satisfied, suggest a link between age and satisfaction. Therefore, in addition to the hypothesised relationships mentioned above, this study also explores the role of customers' profile (i.e. age, gender, income, education used here as control variables) in the relationship between customer satisfaction and its drivers.

4. METHODOLOGY

The social network-based survey's methodology is explained in sections 4.1 and 4.2, where sampling issues along with the contact method used, questionnaire design and variable operationalisation issues are presented, respectively.

4.1 Sampling and contact method

To test the research hypotheses, data have been collected (on-line) from a sample of 210 respondents drawn among social network users. The main advantage of undertaking an on-line survey is according to Hamilton (2009), the fact that the feedback is immediate; in fact, 50% of the sample respond within 17 hours of the initiation of the survey, while the majority of responses (i.e. 87%) are received by the end of the first week. Furthermore, a survey that is conducted in the internet is costless (Kaplowitz et al., 2004). An advantage of carrying out a survey through social networks in particular, is that one can reach individuals that could not be easily reached via other channels; targeting unusually large groups of people that meet digitally and discuss special interest topics, becomes easier among users sharing pronominal interests and attitudes (Wright, 2005). In this survey, the on-line data collection took place with the help of Facebook which, since its introduction in 2004, has been growing into the most popular website of social networking worldwide (Theodorakis, 2009; Boyd and Ellison, 2007). The motivation behind exploring this specific means of data collection is that large numbers of consumers can be targeted to provide costless and timely responses assisting a survey's aims. A convenience sampling method was employed where the selection of the subjects was based largely on the convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Specifically, the author's profile in Facebook was used to target a long list of Facebook friends/guests with an invitation aiming to elicit their participation to the survey. The initial invitation provided respondents with a link to the web-based questionnaire and was followed up by a reminder posted on the third day of the survey. To boost response, the academic purpose of the survey and the confidentiality pertaining to the data collected were highlighted. Approximately 1,200 users were invited to fill in the questionnaire on-line, out of which 210 completed responses were gathered altogether, resulting into a response rate of 17.5% within five days (the duration of

the survey). The profile of the sample drawn on-line among Facebook users consists mainly of females (71.3%) up to 29 years old (76.6%), single (80.9%), holding (one at least) higher education degree (90%) while 86,2% of them earn between €500 to €1300 (see also limitations in section 7). The response is on average, slightly lower than other on-line surveys that according to Hamilton (2009) may reach up to 25%. Yet, this method lends itself for quick data collection as over 100 responses were received within the first 24 hours, only. A downside is that in addition to the 210 responses achieved, there were 100 incomplete questionnaires that had to be discarded. This could be due to the subject of the survey or operational difficulties and certainly not due to a problematic questionnaire design as explained in section 4.2.

4.2 Questionnaire Design and Variable Operationalisation

For the needs of this survey a structured questionnaire was developed on-line and hosted by www.surveymoz.com. The research instrument's cognitive relevance to the respondents was evaluated and confirmed prior to data collection. Thanks to the former host, the data were both collected and retrieved on-line in an excel spreadsheet format that eliminated typing errors and facilitated data entering and coding to speed up the data analysis. The instrument was developed by adapting existing multi-dimensional scales to operationalize the constructs studied, the operationalization of which has a solid academic foundation that derives from the existing literature (see Table 1).

Table 1. Basic references for all scales used

Measures	Items	Basic References
<i>Independent Variables</i>		
Perceived Value		
Perceived Quality	4	Bao and Sheng (2011)
Perceived Value for Money	4	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
Perceived Time/Effort Benefits	3	Chen (2007)
Perceived Social/Psychological Value	6	Chen (2007)
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Customer Satisfaction	16	Kwun (2011)

Table 2 includes the respondents' evaluations regarding the relative difficulty to complete the self-administered questionnaire in terms of the time needed, effort made and knowledge required to address the questions asked (on-line).

Table 2. Assessing the relative difficulty to complete the on-line survey instrument

Variables	Min	Max	Mean, (N=210)	S.D
Relative Difficulty in terms of Time	1	7	1.93	1.28
Relative Difficulty in terms of Effort	1	7	2.18	1.38
Rel. Difficulty in terms of Knowledge	1	7	2.90	1.42

Having taken into account the fact that the respondents' replies suggest an administration instrument that presented to them on average, little difficulty to complete, one may conclude that both the quality and the amount of responses achieved in such a short-period of time, provide evidence for a well-designed instrument and more importantly, underscore the usefulness of this particular means of on-line data collection (i.e. social networks) for market research and consumer satisfaction surveys (see also, methodological contribution in section 6).

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Descriptive analysis and measure reliability assessment

Bivariate statistical analysis (see section 5.1) and multivariate analysis (see section 5.2) have been performed; the former, to statistically describe the variables included in Figure 1, while the latter to test the hypotheses presented in section 3, respectively. Table 3 includes the descriptive statistics of the variables studied where it seems that on average, the sample of respondents places greater emphasis on the quality and the time/effort savings light food goods may offer to the customer (for more, see multivariate statistical analysis' findings in section 5.2). Additionally, internal consistency/reliability tests involving inter-item analysis have been performed so as to make sure that the multi-item measures utilised meet the reliability criteria prior to using them in the multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesised relationships. With the exception of the perceived time/effort benefit scale (see table 3), the reliability calculations for the multi-item scales employed resulted into Cronbach's α statistics (see Flynn et al., 1990) that are well over the minimum acceptable reliability level of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency-reliability analysis for multi-item measures

Measures	Items	Min	Max	Mean	S.D	Cronbach's alpha
Independent Variables						
Perceived Value						
Perceived Value for Money	4	1	7	3.5	1.21	0.904
Perceived Quality	4	2	7	5.39	1.16	0.883
Perceived Time/Effort value benefits	3	1	7	4.80	1.17	0.580
Perceived Social/Psychological value	6	1	7	2.45	1.40	0.906
Dependent Variable						
Customer Satisfaction	16	1	7	4.55	1.18	0.906

5.2 Multivariate statistical analysis

Multiple regression analysis was undertaken to examine the combined impact of perceived value variables on customer satisfaction with light food products as depicted in Figure 1. Note that there are no serious multi-collinearity problems between independent variables as the VIF is below the 3 points limit suggested. The data were also examined for outliers, skewness, kurtosis, and multivariate normality using procedures and plots available by SPSS. The regression analysis results in table 4 show that the predictors explain about 21% of the variance in customer satisfaction thereby capturing (only) some proportion of change in the dependent variable studied. The high level of significance noted suggest that “the probability that the results have occurred by chance is rather unlikely” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.463).

Table 4. Regression results about the relationship between customer satisfaction and its determinants

Independent variables	Dependent variable <i>Customer Satisfaction</i> Stand. beta
<i>Perceived Value for money</i>	0.208**
<i>Perceived Quality</i>	0.207***
<i>Perceived Time/Effort value benefits</i>	0.156**
<i>Perceived Social/Psychological value</i>	0.075
Control variables	
Sex	0,066
Age	-0,041
Education	0,001
Income	-0,077
R²	0.212***

** Significant at the 0.05, *** significant at the 0.01, (Valid N=210)

Specifically, three (out of four) of the perceived value factors examined (see table 5) are found to have an impact on how satisfied customers are with light food products; in contrast, none of the control variables is significantly related to customer satisfaction. More specifically, unlike the perceived psychological/social value benefits, the perceived quality of light foods exhibits a highly significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction ($b=0.207$, $p<0.01$). Also, the perceived value for money is found to be positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction ($b=0.208$, $p<0.05$) which is followed by the perceived value in terms of time/effort benefits ($b=0.156$, $p<0.05$).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In light of the above findings, the notion of perceived value seems an important determinant of customer satisfaction with light foods. Indeed, three (out of four) hypotheses namely, H1, H2 and H3 have found support. By implication, it seems that customer satisfaction is driven primarily by utilitarian values (i.e. product quality, value for money and time/effort savings) rather than social psychology related values light food brands may foster; this is evident across customers in this study's context, irrespective of differences in the customer profile (see also limitations in section 7). Specifically, H2 has found support, suggesting that customer satisfaction with light foods seems to be driven primarily by the customers' perceptions of product quality. This is consistent with the literature placing emphasis on the link between quality and satisfaction (e.g. Oliver, 1997; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Iacobucci, 1995; Dabholkar and Thorpe, 1994; Parasuraman et al, 1988). With respect to the perceived value for money, H1 has been supported, too. This is in line with Munnukka, (2008), where a positive relationship between perceptions on price and customers' satisfaction has been recorded. Regarding the perceived value in terms of the time/effort benefits a light food offers, H3 has found support, too. There is an agreement between the former finding and perceptions of time/effort benefits from a convenience point of view (e.g. Steptoe et al., 1995; Luqmani et al., 1994), arguing for a strong positive relationship with customer satisfaction. In contrast, H4 involving the perceived social psychology related value has been rejected; although one of the reasons underlying consumers' purchases is to enhance their social self-concept (Sweeny and Soutar, 2001; DelVecchio, 2001) this does not seem to be the case here. Satisfaction does not seem to be influenced by any social psychology-related cues, the branding of more (or less) well-known light products may evoke. Last, unlike Cleveland et al's., (2011) findings linking such demographics as age to satisfaction, the customers' profile (i.e. gender,

age, monthly income, education) does not have an effect on satisfaction with light products in the context of this study (see also limitations in section 7).

Light foods constitute one of the emerging and growing sectors in the food industry worldwide and have been studied in various countries as discussed earlier (see section 1). Although light food products have become popular lately due to customers' increasing demand for them, there has *not* been, to the best of the authors' knowledge, a similar academic research study on light food products in the Greek context. This study is *original* in terms of investigating the empirical link between customer satisfaction and perceived value of light food products among Greek consumers via a social network-based survey. The contribution of this paper from a *methodological* point of view, involves the exploration of a new means of data collection in consumer research through employing the most popular social network nowadays namely, Facebook. Despite that this method may be more beneficial for studying populations with internet access (Kaplowitz et al., 2004), the quality and the amount of the responses achieved in a short period of time (see sections 4.1 and 4.2), highlight the usefulness of the proposed means of on-line data collection and consumer satisfaction surveys among widely dispersed yet, predominantly, younger populations. From a *managerial* point of view, this paper sheds light on consumers' perceptions on light food goods and what influences satisfaction with such goods. In fact, the paper shares the view that the better the customers' perceptions towards light food product quality, value for money and time/effort benefits obtained from purchase, the more satisfied consumers are. While such survey output is important to firms because it can be used to formulate marketing strategies and goals (Zakowska – Biemans, 2011), the findings may help managers understand and endorse their customers' perspective by improving such aspects as quality, economical and time/effort savings light products offer. By implication, this paper may guide managerial decision making into placing greater emphasis on utilitarian values (rather than social psychology related values) customers seem to focus on (see Rintamaki et al, 2006) thereby helping firms become more competitive in the respective light food markets served.

7. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In addition to the foregoing contribution of this paper, remember that a primary research objective has been to explore a new means of data collection in market research and customer satisfaction surveys (see section 1); to do so, the paper studied Greek consumers' attitudes towards light foods. Hence, bear in mind that this study placed more emphasis on testing a new market research data collection method rather than developing the most comprehensive conceptualisation of customer satisfaction with light foods and/or enhance the findings' external validity across the Greek context. Having acknowledged the above, two main limitations have to be noted, here. First, the number of hypotheses developed and tested is restricted to four due to the fact that this paper looked into a limited number of drivers of customer satisfaction. Further research should improve the proposed model by linking satisfaction to other likely antecedents including utilitarian and hedonic values (Babin et al., 1994; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) such as product content, sensory appeal or brand familiarity; also, this study has neither looked for relationships among antecedents of customer satisfaction nor examined specific light food categories. By doing so, future research should focus on the combined impact of a greater number of antecedents of customer satisfaction to increase the percentage of the variance explained and/or identifying differences among light food product categories. Second, despite the originality of this study's methodology involving on-line data collection via social networks, the non-probability sampling method employed among Facebook users, resulted in a sample where younger, single, female light food consumers are over-represented, making thus, findings prone to bias. Further research should consider increasing the sample size by including a broader spectrum of consumers as well as those that do not have access to internet and/or a Facebook profile. This would help in terms of improving the sample's representativeness and capturing a wider range of consumers' views about light foods. Failing to do so, is likely to introduce bias to findings and prohibit any kind of generalisations (Saunders et al., 2009).

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