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RESEARCH OF HEALTHY CONSUMPTION TRENDS USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE DAIRY PRODUCTS MARKET⁴

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Summary. Under the current conditions of consumer priorities transformations and the growing public attention to healthy lifestyle as a new concept, special attention is paid to rethinking the role of individual food markets in shaping the population's diet. Structural changes in consumption patterns, increased awareness of nutrition quality, and the spread of healthy lifestyle concepts significantly influence food choices and market dynamics. In this article, the authors examine Healthy consumption trends through the prism of milk market development in Ukraine are investigated by the authors in this paper. Unlike most existing scholarly papers, which primarily focus on production volumes, pricing mechanisms, or foreign trade aspects of the dairy market, this investigation is focused on the relationship between the transformation of consumer perceptions of healthy nutrition and changes in the demand structure for dairy products. Particular attention is paid to how evolving health-related attitudes affect preferences for specific product categories within the dairy segment. The key trends in healthy consumption, including the growing interest in functional, organic, and natural dairy products, as well as lactose-free and the impact of the social movement promoting healthy lifestyle on the marketing strategies of producers in the milk market including product positioning, communication messages, and branding approaches are examined in this investigation. Analysis of changes in demand for dairy products over time is carried out. The main economic, social, and psychological factors influencing consumer choice are identified. The prerequisites for increasing the production and sales potential of dairy producers while simultaneously improving their ability to respond flexibly to challenges arising from changes in consumer preferences are substantiated. Special attention is paid to the description of the characteristics of marketing strategies employed by producers that adapt to new consumer expectations and use the concept of healthy nutrition as a strategic tool to enhance competitiveness. The methodological framework of the investigation is based on the analysis of scientific publications, the generalization of statistical data, and the examination of market trends. The findings contribute to deeper scientific understanding of the role of dairy products in modern models of healthy nutrition and can be applied in the development of marketing strategies for dairy enterprises, taking into account current consumer trends and long-term market transformations.

Key words: marketing strategy, consumer preferences, healthy lifestyle, milk market, competitiveness.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ТРЕНДІВ ЗДОРОВОГО СПОЖИВАННЯ НА ПРИКЛАДІ РИНКУ МОЛОЧНОЇ ПРОДУКЦІЇ⁵

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Резюме. В сучасних умовах трансформації споживчих пріоритетів та зростання уваги суспільства до здорового способу життя як нового концепту особливого значення набуває переосмислення ролі окремих продовольчих ринків у формуванні раціону населення. Автори дослідили тенденції здорового споживання крізь призму розвитку ринку молока в Україні. Вибір ринку пояснюється тим, що саме молочна продукція традиційно сприймається споживачами як складова збалансованого та корисного харчування. На відміну від більшості наявних наукових праць, що зосереджені переважно на виробничих, цінових або зовнішньоторговельних аспектах функціонування молочного ринку. Автори сконцентрували увагу на дослідженні взаємозв'язку між трансформацією споживчих уявлень про здорове харчування та змінами у структурі попиту на молочну продукцію. Проаналізовано ключові тренди здорового споживання, зокрема зростання інтересу до функціональних та натуральних молочних продуктів, а також вплив суспільної течії щодо промоції здорового способу життя на маркетингові стратегії виробників на ринку молока. Здійснено аналіз зміни попиту на продукцію молочної галузі в часі. Досліджено фактори, які впливають на вибір споживачів. Обґрунтовано передумови для нарощування виробничого та збутового потенціалу виробників на ринку молочної продукції з одночасним покращенням здатності до гнучкого реагування на виклики за зміни споживчих переваг. Особливу увагу приділено опису особливостей маркетингових стратегій виробників, які адаптуються до нових споживчих очікувань і використовують концепцію здорового харчування як інструмент підвищення конкурентоспроможності. Методологічною основою дослідження стали аналіз наукових публікацій, узагальнення статистичних даних і вивчення ринкових тенденцій. Отримані результати дозволяють розширити наукове розуміння ролі молочної продукції в сучасних моделях здорового харчування та можуть бути використані при розробленні маркетингових стратегій підприємств молочної галузі з урахуванням актуальних споживчих трендів.

Ключові слова: маркетингова стратегія, споживчі уподобання, здоровий спосіб життя, ринок молока, конкурентоспроможність.

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Statement of the problem. For the Ukrainian dairy market, as for most agricultural food markets, the operating conditions in both the domestic and international markets changed with the beginning of the Russian Federation military aggression. Milk is one of the food products and raw materials that ensures a certain level of food security in the country. In addition to being one of the main healthy food products in the human diet, this product is also a raw material for the production of basic dairy products such as butter, cheese, yoghurt, fermented baked milk, etc. Over the past decades, the domestic dairy industry has faced a number of challenges such as decline in cattle number, decrease in milk production volumes, and loss of positions in the domestic market due to the imbalance between supply and demand. Therefore, under the current conditions of unstable economic and political situation in Ukraine, when the market becomes not only the platform for the exchange of goods, but also strategically important food supply chain, analysis of the state of the dairy market is an important task.

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Analysys of available researches and publications. Recently certain aspects of the investigation of the Ukrainian dairy market have been the subject of scientific works by domestic scientists in recent years. In particular, S. Stakhurska provides a detailed analysis of the current trends in the development of this industry, suggesting opportunities for reducing market risks through the introduction of new technologies and adapting dairy production to changes in demand [1]. L. Palovska and K. Kashchuk in their research of the dairy market, describe the crisis phenomena of this industry, emphasizing the changes in consumer needs, which is manifested in the decline in demand for drinking milk and the growing interest in «cleanlabel» products. The factors influencing the dairy market were modeled by Kosar N. and her colleagues in their paper [3]. They identify the key determinants of milk demand in Ukraine and assess their impact. In this paper, economic and mathematical models are built in order to forecast consumption volumes and plan dairy production, taking into account the impact of market conditions. In their scientific paper, I. Korman and other scientists concluded that the efficiency of the dairy market functioning significantly depends on the peculiarities of the interaction of such determining parameters as supply, demand, prices, and the competitiveness of the product itself [4]. Ye. Khmelnytska and her colleagues, in their paper [5], focus on the investigation of the trends in changes of market indicators such as the dynamics of dairy product imports and exports, as well as consumption trends. They note that adaptation to changes in international markets, as well as development of flexible export policy for the country, can contribute to stabilization of domestic milk production. The investigation of healthy products market sector in Ukraine, presented in paper [6] showed that consumers most often include dairy products among other products in this sector, considering them to be beneficial for health. This indicates a positive image of dairy products in the minds of consumers.

The objective of the investigation is to analyze the dynamics of demand for dairy products in Ukraine, taking into account real behavioral and market trends, as well as to identify the factors influencing consumer choice and determining structural changes in the production and consumption of dairy products in the context of the transformation of consumer priorities.

Statement of the task. An important task is to analyze real behavioral and market trends in the dairy market, rather than merely the perception of these products as healthy among consumers. It is reasonable to analyze the change in demand for dairy products over time, the factors influencing consumer choice, structural changes in production and consumption, which is the objective of this investigation.

Presentation of the main investigation material. The dairy market in Ukraine is strategically important segment of the food industry that has undergone transformations over the past five years. The investigated period covers the stages of post-pandemic recovery, the beginning of the full-scale invasion, and adaptation to the conditions of wartime economy. The geographical boundaries of the market formally cover the entire territory of Ukraine, however, the actual activities of producers and logistics chains are concentrated in the controlled territories, with production shifting toward the western and central regions due to the occupation and destruction of facilities in the eastern and southern parts of the country. This market is characterized by high degree of volatility. Until 2022, the industry developed according to a classic scenario, with clear seasonality and steady growth in export potential; however, the war has altered the structure of the raw material base. The key factor limiting market development is the decline in the cattle population. According to the Milk Producers Association, as of July 1, 2025, Ukraine had 2,169,500 head of cattle, of which 1,146,200 were cows. Compared to the same period in 2024, these figures decreased by 192,000 head of cattle (–8%) and 106,000 cows (–8%), respectively [7]. However, it should be noted that according to K. Eccles, «Milk can replace any product, but there is no product that can replace milk» [8], therefore, the production of dairy products under any conditions of the functioning of the national economy remains an urgent task to provide the population with the necessary nutritional components.

At present, the Ukrainian dairy market includes many enterprises of various forms of ownership and sizes. Among them are companies with well-known brands such as «Yahotynske», «Halychyna», «Danone», and «Ferma», as well as medium and small-sized enterprises. In total, there are about 350 milk processing enterprises operating in the market. Among them up to 100 companies produce nearly 90% of all dairy products on the market [9]. Practically every region of Ukraine has local dairy producers, which makes competition in the domestic dairy market fairly high.

According to Kantar research [10], consumers of dairy products in Ukraine primarily focus on practical criteria. When purchasing dairy products, the most important factor for Ukrainians is price, which was indicated by 46% of respondents. Quality ranks second (42%). Brand or manufacturer is considered by 32% of consumers, while 30% pay attention to the product's naturalness. For 26% of Ukrainians, it is important that the dairy product is domestically produced. Promotional offers or discounts influence the choice of 20% of respondents. The sources of information about dairy products are mostly packaging and labeling: instructions on composition and expiration dates, as well as advertising and personal experience, in particular through advice from friends/family and reviews on the Internet. Despite price pressure, the Ukrainian consumer remains picky regarding quality. The main criterion for product safety is compliance with the DSTU 4399:2005 standard. Analysis of reviews on social media and forums shows that the presence of the «DSTU» mark on packaging is a mandatory trust indicator for eight out of ten consumers. An important aspect of choosing dairy products is differentiation by fat content. If we consider such dairy product as butter, then in the minds of the Ukrainian consumer there is a stereotype that butter with 82.5% fat content («Extra») is of higher quality and more natural than butter with 73% fat content («Selyanske»). However, due to significant difference in price (on average by 15–25%), butter with 82.5% fat content has moved into the category of special consumption (for holidays, for children), while the vast majority of consumers mostly buy butter with 73% fat content. An important source of information about dairy products for consumers is the place of sale itself. Packaging acts as a «silent salesperson»: it should clearly inform the consumer about the product's fat content, weight/volume (consumers react negatively to shrinkflation – a reduction in the weight or volume of dairy product packaging), and the quality indicators relevant for consumption. For consumers over 50, television advertising remains an important factor, shaping the emotional image of the brand (tradition, family, naturalness). Younger audiences more often turn to digital channels: reviews on TikTok and YouTube (e.g., «checking the naturalness of dairy products at home») and feedback in delivery apps such as Glovo and Zakaz.ua. Negative review about the presence of harmful impurities from popular blogger can instantly reduce trust in the brand of dairy product manufacturer. Therefore, the profile of dairy consumer in 2025 is a person who balances the desire to consume natural products and the need to save. Consumers have become less brand-loyal but more attentive to product composition and price, which forces producers to invest continuously in quality control and conduct aggressive pricing promotions to retain customers. The main distribution channels for dairy products are retail networks (both national and local supermarkets), which sell packaged products directly to consumers, and the B2B segment (industrial processing), such as confectionery and bakery enterprises, which purchase dairy products for their own production.

The market is characterized by high saturation and transformation. Competition for the consumer is driven less by expanding the product range, which is fairly standard, and more by pricing promotions and brand strength. The key challenge for 2026 is the threat from European manufacturers: the price-sensitive buyer is increasingly ignoring loyalty to the national manufacturer in favor of cheaper imports. This results in the polarization of consumption, where the «middle-class» tier of products disappears: consumers either switch to cheaper dairy products and promotional imports, or, if financially able, completely migrate to the premium

segment. It is worth noting that in recent years, the Ukrainian dairy market has shown trends reflecting global shifts in consumer priorities toward healthy nutrition. Thus, despite the increase in retail prices for dairy products, in particular milk, yogurt, and cheese, in the first half of 2025 [11], products from this segment remained an important component of the diet of Ukrainians, as they are associated with healthy lifestyle by the vast majority of the population. This trend can also be observed in school nutrition programs. Conclusions from international forums and exhibitions of Ukrainian dairy producers indicate a growing interest among Ukrainian companies in positioning their products as organic and with added nutritional value, aligning with global consumer trends toward «healthy superfood» products. Consumers prefer dairy products that combine benefits from their consumption, convenience, and balanced composition [12]. Companies in their marketing strategies focus on promoting fermented milk products, yogurt with probiotics, and products that have functional properties, improving immunity and digestion. The diffusion of the healthy consumption trend is further supported by the increasing competition among dairy producers. In order to maintain competitiveness, producers expand their product ranges and emphasize the natural ingredients and nutritional value of their products. To achieve this goal, they use measures such as certification, labeling, and informational campaigns highlighting the health benefits of milk when included in the daily diet. Initiatives of thematic platforms, such as «Znaimo», which promote healthy nutrition, stimulate the development of dairy industry, popularizing this product as part of balanced diet for children and youth, and healthy lifestyle.

Conclusions. The Ukrainian dairy market demonstrates high adaptability. Despite the reduction in raw material base and security threats, the industry remains resilient and continues to ensure the country's food security. The price imbalance, which requires producers to develop new sales strategies and optimize their costs remains the primary challenge. The reduction in the number of cows and the loss of the part of production capacity slow down the growth, while the modernization of livestock farming and the expansion of processing provide stimulus for increasing production volumes. The increase in domestic consumption, resulting from the return of the population and stabilization of prices, compensates the part of production decline. Promising direction is the growth of exports, as Ukrainian dairy products are gradually entering new foreign markets. The main factors influencing the future are the end of the war, changes in demographic dynamics, and general global trends toward healthy nutrition. As a result, the Ukrainian dairy market will maintain and increase its production and sales potential in the agricultural food sector, enabling it to respond flexibly to external challenges and changes in consumer preferences.

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