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PROFILE AND BEHAVIOR OF THE CONSUMER OF HANDMADE GINGER CANDY IN PARANÁ COAST

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ABSTRACT

Ginger has been cultivated in Brazil since the middle of 1500's, and it is nowadays widely used as a condiment in the manufacture of beverages, perfumes, breads, cakes, biscuits, jellies, soft drinks and candies, especially the ginger candy that has been produced by small farmers in Paraná Coast. Although the delicacy is classified as an important alternative in income generation and regional development, no studies on the subject were found. In this context, a descriptive and exploratory research was carried out from July to December of 2018 with 100 consumers of this candy, and the study aimed to investigate the profile and behavior of the consumers of handmade ginger candy, in order to guide the production of the candy in micro and small industries in Paraná Coast. The research revealed that there was no significant statistical difference in the consumption of ginger candy related to gender and age. It was observed with regard to the consumers marital status that the divorced ones bought more candies than singles and married ones. The appearance of the ginger candy was classified by the consumer as an unsatisfactory attribute, being one of the main rejection factors. The adoption of the mix of flavors with other fruits could soften the strong flavor of the ginger and change the color pattern and significantly improving the penetration capacity of the candy in the market. It is concluded that regarding to the product distribution (points of sale), the producers should evaluate the possibility of opening new distribution channels, expand the line-up (mix of products offered), location of the sales point and delivery logistics to new customers. The observation of these factors may in the medium term, increase the market share of the ginger candies produced in the region, then raising the competitiveness levels.

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INTRODUCTION

Ginger, scientific name *Zingiber officinale*, from Tropical Asia, is an herbaceous plant, perennial, it is composed of rhizome and aerial part, which can reach more than 1 meter in height, is also known by the alternative names: *mangarataia* and *mangaratá*, and arrived in Brazil in the middle of 1500's (Silva, 2008; Ferrão, 2013). The ginger has medicinal and pharmacological effects proven by science, and these effects has been explored since ancient times, due to its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antiemetic (good nausea and

vomiting), anti-obesity, antibacterial and antidiarrheals properties among others (Negrelle et al., 2005; Elpo et al., 2008; Hemkemeier, 2018). Ginger is also used in the manufacture of beverages, perfumes, breads, cakes, biscuits, jellies, soft drinks, and candies (Negrelle et al., 2005; Elpo et al., 2008). The rhizome of this plant is very commercialized both in the internal Brazilian market and abroad because of its wide use in the production of food, cosmetics and in the herbal medicine industry (Carmo and Balbino, 2015). Although the ginger has grown in the agroindustry and industrial sector, it is also important to highlight its commercialization of the product *in natura* (fresh) (Negrelle et al., 2005). India is the largest producer and consumer of ginger around the world, however its market share in the world is only 6% of the product *in natura*. On the other hand, when it is about the

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production of essential oil and resin oil extracted from ginger, the India participation is 50% of the world's supply. While China leads the production of fresh ginger (Negrelle *et al.*, 2005; Elpo *et al.*, 2008). The international market is supplied by producers from several countries, and the price depends on the quality of the product that is sold the *in natura* form. The Brazilian market, then is supplied with the discards of the exportation products (Nogueira and Mello, 2001). The Brazilian ginger-producing territory covers the coastal regions of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Espírito Santo and Northeastern Coast and some regions of Minas Gerais, Goiás and Rio de Janeiro. (Negrelle *et al.*, 2005). One of the main obstacles faced by ginger producers is the lack of commercial strategies that make them need intermediaries to carry out sales to the foreign market, thus implicating a good part of the income. In addition, another difficulty is the high cost of the activity, which involves several factors such as fertilization products, pest and disease treatment, and the necessary manpower at all stages of the crop production process (Nogueira and Mello, 2001). Nowadays the Brazilian production is estimated at 10 (ten) thousand tons per year (Negrelle *et al.*, 2005). Espírito Santo State is the largest producer and exporter of ginger in Brazil (Carmo and Balbino, 2015). The ginger cultivation in the State of Paraná was introduced by families descended from Japanese in the mid-1990s (Epagri, 1998; Elpo; Negrelle, 2006), with a favorable climate and high commercial demand, it became an important cultivation because of the introduction of a variety of rhizomes that are more accepted by domestic and foreign markets (Magalhães, 1997). Paraná Coast produces 97% of the state ginger production, being cultivated in Morretes, Guaraqueçaba, Antonina, Paranaguá and Guaratuba, in an approximate area of 194 ha, with an average production of 3,880 tons (Negrelle *et al.*, 2005). Morretes is the largest producer in Paraná, responsible for 54% of all state production (Elpo and Negrelle, 2006).

According to Negrelle *et al.* (2005), from the 2000's there was a gradual reduction of ginger crops, due to the lack of motivation of the producers, the dependence of the intermediaries who forced to reduce the prices, and also in reason of the market demand for the perfection in quality, size and absence of fungi. Elpo *et al.* (2008) added that these changes affected the rural families engaged in the production and trade of ginger, and under the economic and technological approach it demanded the need for greater planning of activities in agribusiness and the search for diversification of production in field. Anacleto *et al.* (2014) reinforce this assumption and describe that the continuous changes in agribusiness in Paraná Coast have forced families to search for other income alternatives, different from traditional ones, and that generate resources to support the family. In this context, the rural micro-industries have gained great relevance and specifically in the case of ginger, the manufacture of the ginger candy. The ginger candy according to Negrelle *et al.* (2005) is handmade produced in 34 rural micro-industries in Paraná and the main raw material is the ginger rhizome. Elpo and Negrelle (2006) describe that the ginger candy is a handmade product, classified as exotic, with a strong flavor, being referenced as a therapeutic alternative for throats and stomach aches due to its medicinal properties, and this delicacy has been conquering more and more clients. The product can be found easily in fairs, tents and handicraft shops all over the coast, but with greater intensity in Morretes and Antonina. The economic base of the Paraná Coast region is driven mainly by summer

tourism, natural areas rich in biodiversity and gastronomic tourism (Meira, 2013), and in this context the production and trade of handmade products, such as the ginger candy, play an important role in complementing the local economy (Pierri *et al.*, 2006). The production of the ginger candy facilitated by the access to raw material with lower cost and good quality encouraged the manufacture of the delicacy, creating a new income alternative to those involved in the process. According to Negrelle *et al.* (2005), the establishment of strategies for rural micro-industries that serve the interests of consumers requires that rural producers, in a general context, show efficiency and quality of production, and they should be attentive to the desires and needs of the consumers. However, due to the recent insertion of the product in the market, few and sparse studies were found on the ginger candy (product) as well as on the profile and the behavior of the consumers, and according to Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) to know what the consumer thinks and what the consumer wants is an essential factor for the rural micro-industries that have the production of candies as their central business.

According to Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) the adoption of marketing practices is relevant because this makes possible to identify the variables, internal and external, that influence the behavior of consumers, of the product or services in general, which under broad approach is directly related to the origin, age, culture and economic income of the consumer. In this way, the understanding of these elements' relation enables the definition of the best action plan, in order to meet the real desires of the consumer, thus stimulating their perception of satisfaction. In order to contribute to the decision-making on marketing strategies, it is essential to carry out an in-depth analysis of the elements that constitute the marketing mix that is defined by Churchill and Peter (2012) as being a set of tools developed by the organizations that aim the creation of value to clients in order to achieve their goals. These tools are product, price, distribution places and promotion that are aligned in order to get the maximum effectiveness. The setting of marketing mix strategies depends on the understanding of the customers' profile and the market where the organization is inserted. For this, it is necessary to search the clients, segment them and select the groups that will be served, thus defining the target markets (Churchill and Peter, 2012). The purchase decision of the consumer is driven by the recognition of needs, the search for product information, the alternatives evaluation, the purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation. The consumer behavior is influenced by several internal and external factors that result in the purchase decision. In this context, marketing professional based on consumer perspective analyzes, should define the best action strategy in order to provide the company the best direction to develop products and services which will reach the customer satisfaction (Churchill and Peter, 2012). Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) reinforce that in the specific case of rural micro-industries, to know the profile and behavior of the consumer, in fact, is a factor that could determine the success of the company. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the profile and behavior of handmade ginger candies consumers, in order to guide the production in micro and small industries that produce this delicacy in Paraná Coast.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research method adopted for this study was the exploratory-descriptive, with quantitative nature with the

purpose of gathering information in order to analyze the profile of consumers, as well as their ideas and perceptions, which may generate explanations or hypotheses, in relation to the product consumed (Churchill and Peter, 2012). The data were collected from July to December of 2018 using the application of questionnaires, randomly to 100 consumers of handmade ginger candies. In order to define the consumers' profile, as recommended by Anacleto *et al.* (2017), information on gender, age, marital status, economic condition and the classification of the economic condition were collected according to the Brazilian Criterion (Abep, 2018). The evaluation of the influence of gender, age and economic status on the levels of handmade ginger candy consumption was evaluated according to what was proposed by Hair *et al.* (2009). Thus, non-parametric tests of Mann-Whitney and Spearman and Kruskal-Wallis correlation coefficients were used, followed by Dunn's averages multiple comparison test at a significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$). The marketing mix (price, place, promotion and product) was evaluated according to t Anacleto *et al.* (2017) considering the level of consumer satisfaction, in relation to the product and in relation to the regional trade.

The level of consumer satisfaction evaluation was done by the Kano Model of attractive and obligatory quality (Kano, 1984). This model identifies which attributes the customer classifies as obligatory and prerequisite to the consumption. It also classifies the satisfaction obtained in post-consumption, in the following categories:

- If the prerequisite expectation scale before purchase is greater than the post-purchase satisfaction scale, the product requirements should be improved.
- If the pre and post purchase attributes are matched, it only will avoid the customer from being dissatisfied (neutral attributes).
- If the prerequisites before the purchase are lower than the post-consumer satisfaction, it means that the product is at optimal levels in relation to the market (positive attributes) and meets the needs and desires of the consumer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that there was no significant statistical difference in the consumption of ginger candy among the genders (Table 1), however the study revealed that the majority of consumers are women ($n = 63\%$) when it is related to product acquisition.

Table 1. Comparison among genders on the number of times that consumers bought handmade ginger candy from Paraná Coast in the last 12 months. (N = 100)

Criterion	Total of respondents	Annual average frequency of ginger candy purchase
Female	63%	1,92 a
Male	37%	2,03 a
Mann-Whitney test, p – significance value		p = 0,325

The probable explanation for the greater presence of women in the acquisition of the product may reside in the medicinal properties described by Negrelle *et al.* (2005) who emphasize that the ginger candy is used to minimize the effects of hoarseness, sore throat among others. Women from ancient times have always had a greater relationship with the use of

natural products to combat the health problems of their families, so given the scientific evidence of the therapeutic properties of the ginger candy under these conditions, marketing campaigns directed to a specific audience could increase levels of consumption, as also described by Cordeiro *et al.* (2014). The age group that was most present in the commercial establishments which sell the ginger candy ($n = 69.08\%$) was 18 to 35 years old, however this age group was the one that presented the lowest average purchases of the candy per year. The highest averages of consumption were observed in the age group from 56 to 65 years old, which demonstrated significant differences when compared to the other classes evaluated, but it was evidenced that no correlation was observed between the increase of consumption as the age progressed (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison among the number of times that consumers bought handmade ginger candy from Paraná Coast in the last 12 months, by age group. (N = 100)

Criterion	Sample quantity %	Annual average frequency of ginger candy purchase
From 18 to 25 years old	31,97	2,11 a
From 26 to 35 years old	37,11	1,68 a
From 36 to 45 years old	14,43	3,00 b
From 46 to 55 years old	10,30	2,38 a
From 56 to 65 years old	6,19	4,67 c
r – Spearman's correlation coefficient;		r = 0,424;
p – significance value ($p < 0,05$)		p < 0,001

The probable explanation for the fact that the largest age group presented the highest level of consumption may be associated, according to Hemkemeier *et al.* (2018) that the ginger has anti-inflammatory, antiemetic (reducing nausea and vomiting) and anti-diarrheal functions. In addition, the authors say that the substances called gingerol and shogaol, which are present in the ginger, are the main responsible for the organoleptic and therapeutic properties, and as people get older, they are more concerned about health, so the highest consumption may be associated to the described benefits of the ginger to the health. The family income was not a factor of relevance to the consumption, since it was not observed correlation between the frequency of purchase and the increase or reduction of income (Table 3).

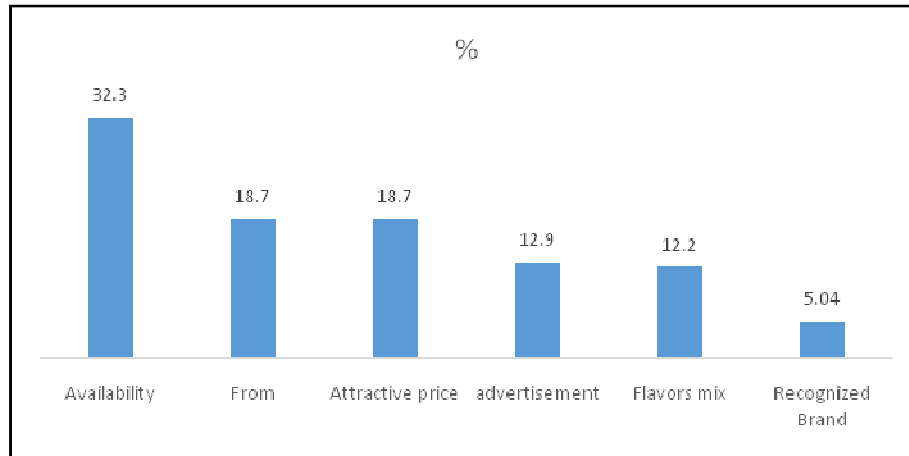
Table 3. Sample distribution of the study according to family income. (N = 100)

Class	Financial Income USD	Sample quantity %	Annual average frequency of ginger candy purchase
A	above de \$ 6297,11	3	1,00 a
B1	\$ 2801,66 to \$ 6297,11	7	2,00 a
B2	\$ 1446,67 to \$ 2801,66	16	2,00 a
C1	\$ 799,97 to \$ 1446,67	33	2,27 a
C2	\$ 456,25 to \$ 799,97	20	1,75 a
D	\$ 191,03 to \$ 456,25	15	1,33 a
E	to \$ 191,03	6	2,33 a
r – Spearman's correlation coefficient;			r = -0,041; p = 0,346
p – significance value ($p < 0,05$)			

Thus, it is assumed that because it is a product that has low price, it shows little impact on the family budget, in this way the purchase of ginger candy becomes accessible to consumers of all income classes evaluated. There was a difference in the annual frequency of ginger candy purchase related to the marital status of the consumers. It was evidenced that the divorced ones bought more candies than the singles and married ones (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison among the number of times that consumers bought handmade ginger candy from Paraná Coast in the last 12 months, by marital status. (N = 100)

Criterion	Sample quantity %	Annual average frequency of ginger candy purchase
Single	41	1,68 a
Married or Stable Union	53	2,11 ab
Divorced	6	3,00 b
Kruskal-Wallis' test		p = 0,056

**Figure 1. The main motivating factors in the increase of the handmade ginger candy in Paraná Coast (N = 100)****Table 5. Satisfaction index of attractive and obligatory quality of the consumer in relation to the commercial marketing mix of the handmade ginger candy from Paraná Coast - Model Kano (1984) (N = 100); (from July to December 2018)**

		Prerequisite to consumption (average grade)	Post-purchase satisfaction (average grade)	Attribute Index	Attribute Classification
Price	Price	3,47	3,27	- 0,20	Negative
	Payment methods	3,28	3,19	- 0,09	Negative
Place	Easy to find	3,92	3,27	- 0,65	Negative
	Service quality	4,07	3,67	- 0,40	Negative
Promotion	Promotions	2,91	2,98	+ 0,07	Positive
Product	Packaging appearance	3,71	3,64	- 0,07	Negative
	Product appearance	3,91	3,80	- 0,11	Negative
	Consistency	3,90	3,85	- 0,05	Negative
	Candy color	2,75	3,45	+ 0,70	Positive
	Origin information	3,92	3,71	- 0,21	Negative
	Number of units per package	3,62	3,67	+ 0,05	Positive
	Flavor	4,37	4,09	- 0,28	Negative

It was not possible to evaluate the reasons why consumption among the divorced ones was higher, and new studies should be necessary, however Santana and Araújo (2017) describe that the divorced consumer, due to the change in life, can present different behaviors, in general, higher consumption levels of sweets. The study revealed that a significant portion of the respondents (n = 40%) reported that they had recently purchased ginger candy, and only once to try it. Studies developed by Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) with a product similar to ginger candy found that the rate of people at first consumption or experimentation was 14.5% of the total consumers interviewed, so in this context, given the high percentage of respondents who were consuming the ginger candy for the first time, it can be considered that this product needs to be more widely disseminated to the consumers of similar products. The need of product divulgation becomes even more evident as, according to the interviewees, the main factor that makes it difficult to raise the consumption of ginger candy is the difficulty of finding the product (Figure 1).

Question with multiple answers: The low availability of the product in the market may be related to three possible factors. The first one, according to Dentz (2015), is that the handmade

food producers are not always able to provide all the documentation required by government agencies because of the high cost of these requirements, which avoids them from being sold in other regions. The second factor is related to the low availability of the product in the market, which may be linked to the handmade production system, specifically in Paraná Coast, as Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) says, the typical products of the region most often come from the rural family micro-industry, in this way they are produced with the use of techniques and utensils, passed from generation to generation, so the production capacity is limited and this condition makes the commercialization of these products takes place around the local where they are manufactured, and by tradition, they serve in a reduced form the demand. The third factor may be related to the ways in which the ginger candy is inserted in the marketing mix, given that, in this aspect, it was evidenced a strong predominance of consumer dissatisfaction in factors related to price, place and product (Table 5). Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) emphasize that consumers are more and more concerned about knowing meticulously the information about the products they are consuming as well as the way they are produced. Dentz (2015) complements that the certification stamps, such as: Controlled Origin Denomination (COD);

Protected Geographical Identity (PGI); and Guaranteed Traditional Specialty (GTS), recognized in several European countries, are important mechanisms to provide guarantees on the origin of handmade food, thus generating value and recognition of the quality of these products to consumers. Related to handmade products, among which the ginger candy is inserted, people choose for handmade food for the quality linked to health concern, since in the food prepared by hand, usually the ingredients used do not contain chemical substances unlike the industrialized products. According to Dentz (2015) the main characteristic of handmade food is the small-scale production prepared by members of the same family.

The handmade production of typical products in Paraná Coast, under a general context, is described by Anacleto *et al.* (2014) as fragile and lacking organizational systems, especially in commercial management that requires a higher level of professionalism, however, this movement must be adapted to the reality in which the ginger candy producers live. Similar to that was described by Anacleto *et al.* (2014), apparently in the case of the ginger candies, the price is at a level, high enough to satisfy the producers' profitability, while at the same time in relation to the consumers the prices are low and do not act as the main source of inhibition and rejection consumption, situation classified as ideal. In this aspect, according to Kotler (2008), the determination of the sale price influences the capacity of market penetration, however, in the case of ginger candy there are other factors related by the consumers (Table 5) that need immediate action. The products sought by consumers, once the first barrier has expired, the price, must present quality; if this condition is not met, they will look for another product that will provide the same objectives; in the case of the ginger candies, it is offered a wide variety of delicacies that have similar value, and Cordeiro *et al.* (2014) describe that the banana candy is the most sought delicacy in the region, therefore it is classified as the main substitute product of the ginger candy.

It is worth mentioning that there is a range of consumers who do not buy products only because of the price, and tend to consume it regardless of the amount to be paid, so the price is not determinant for the consumption; in this case, the determining factor for consumption will be the quality. Related to the product quality, the first factor that deserves careful attention from the producers is the appearance of the ginger candy, this item showed the highest consumer dissatisfaction index (Table 5) which was classified as inadequate. In a such competitive market, ginger candy micro-industries must develop differentiated mechanisms in order to attract new consumers, so they could promote product experimentation and gain customer loyalty. The creation of value is not limited to meeting the needs and desires of the customers, the ginger candy micro-industries must improve the existing products and develop new products that will awaken customers' wishes (KOTLER, 2008). The producers should promote changes in product appearance and measure consumer satisfaction until they reach more satisfactory levels on the product quality. In this context, a relevant alternative to solving the problem of consumer dissatisfaction with the appearance of the ginger candies can reside in the adoption of a mix of flavors as the main requirement to raise the level of consumer satisfaction.

The ginger candy taste cannot always please all palates, this fact occurs because in the delicacy is maintained the strong and spicy taste of ginger, in this way, probably, if the

producers of ginger candies create new flavors by mix the ginger with fruits or other ingredients, could, in addition to softening the ginger taste, making the candies more colorful enhancing the appearance that was one of the main rejection factors among the consumers interviewed. Once the quality of a product has met the wishes of consumers, in all aspects, a new product positioning on the market should be adopted in order to raise the recognition level of ginger candy by the consumers. Thus, it is urgent as an alternative to increase the commercialization of handmade ginger candy, as well as other handmade foods, the expansion of marketing channels, which may result in the increase of the product visibility making it better known. According to Rocha and Platt (2015), the adoption of managing practices in the distribution channels, while requiring time and resources, makes the products available at the right moment and place to the consumers. However, it is worth considering that the availability attribute was considered by the consumers as the main factor that prevents the increasing of handmade ginger candy consumption. The increase of the product availability on the market, according to Kotler (2008), is possible using the efforts of marketing channels that are the set of organizations that work as intermediaries to transfer products or services from producers/manufacturers to the clients and consumers. The distribution channels have significant importance in the achievement of competitiveness and differentiation in the market (Rocha and Platt, 2015), and according to Kotler (2008) the distribution channels are constituted by levels formed by the quantity of intermediaries that determines the extensions of the marketing channels.

Nowadays the channel levels identified and practiced in the commercialization of the handmade ginger candy, are the direct marketing channel in which the producers themselves sell directly to the consumers in a viral marketing process, and it is also called as one level channel, in which the sale is made by an intermediary in the tourist tents installed in central points in the cities of Paraná Coast. One of the characteristics observed in the ginger candy trade is precisely the close contact between the producer and the consumers at the fairs and special events held throughout the year, and more strongly during the summer time. In this context, the adoption of more effective commercial strategies could guarantee the use of the available structures and a greater production outflow. Paraná Coast, because it receives a large number of tourists during the summer time, shows good conditions to promote a better dissemination of the ginger candy and increase the potential of consumption, one of the alternatives to be considered is the adoption of sensorial marketing, that basically consists the producers provide samples for tasting.

According to Esteves (2014) sensory perception is closely related to the joint stimulus of the senses (taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing), in this way each client can have his/her own subjective analysis about the product, and if they appreciate the candy, they can buy more than a single unit, or even repeat the purchase. The advertisement to be carried out during the summer time should be considered as an important aspect by the producers in order to increase the number of handmade ginger candy consumers. Churchill and Peter (2012) describe that the role of promotion, one of the elements that make up the marketing mix, is to provide information about the product using several means of communication available to the current and potential customers, so this can raise a positive interest on the product offered and motivating them to buy it.

Kotler (2008) says that it is not enough to develop a good quality product with attractive price, it is necessary that the general public knows about the existence of this product. In this way, it becomes imperative that the ginger candy producers develop means that could bring visibility to the product and thus boost the sales. Thus, regarding the distribution of the product (points of sale), the producers should evaluate the possibility of opening new distribution channels, expand the line-up (line of products offered), location of the point of sale and the delivery logistics to new customers. So the observation of these factors may, in the medium term, increase the market share of these candies produced in the region and raising levels of competitiveness.

Final Considerations

The research revealed that there was no significant statistical difference in the consumption of ginger candy related to gender and age. It was observed in relation to the marital status of the consumers, the divorced ones bought more candies than the singles and the married ones. The appearance of the handmade ginger candy was classified by the consumer as unsatisfactory. The adoption of a mix of flavors with other fruits can soften the strong flavor of the ginger and change the color pattern, which could significantly improve the appearance of the candy and therefore its power in penetrating in the market. It is concluded that related to the product distribution (points of sale) the producers should evaluate the possibility of opening new distribution channels, expand the line-up (line of products offered), location of the point of sale and the delivery logistics to new customers. So, the observation of these factors may, in the medium term, increase the market share these handmade ginger candies produced in the region by raising levels of competitiveness.

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