

## Olive Oil Consumption Attitudes: Millennials vs Non-Millennials

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### Abstract

Olive oil is a traditional product with strategic designation for the Mediterranean countries since the ancient times. Compared to other agricultural products, the fact that olive production takes place in limited areas increases the importance of the international trade of this product. Developments in healthy food consumption have also effected the importance of researches on olive oil consumption in recent years. In the scope of this research, olive oil consumption behaviors and tendencies of Generation Y (Millennials) and other generations were researched comparatively by applying face to face survey to 520 individuals. To analyze the data obtained percent distribution and Chi-square test methods were applied. The results of the research show that the focal generations have different behaviors and attitudes for olive oil place of purchase, consumption quantities, usage patterns and factors affecting the purchase. Determining trends and behaviors of different generations in consumption of olive oil is important for the future of the industry.

**Keywords:** Olive oil, generations, consumption, attitudes, Turkey

### INTRODUCTION

The term “generation” identifies a group of people who are born during a particular period and living about the same time. People in this birth cohort having similar ideas, attitudes and problems, shared similar cultural experiences and their life courses correspond to each other [12]. Gen X, baby boomer, and Gen Y (millennials) are some of the birth cohorts which are named as generation cohorts.

In order to determine the purchase and consumption behaviors and attitudes of the consumers on food products, it could be helpful if these generation cohorts are considered. Consumer motivations and purchase engagement on food consumption and purchase often lie below the factor “age”. Studies on generation cohorts and segmentation suggest that representatives of different generations have set of unique values, beliefs, and attitudes that result in differing behaviors. In marketing studies, investigating common characteristics of generational cohorts has become a useful tool in segmenting markets since cohort members share similar values and generational cohorts have different experiences, which influence their values, preferences and shopping behavior [12,8].

Since decades, while the purchasing behavior of the baby boomer generation (1946-1964) has been a driving force for the economy, this group is aging. Although it is still a dominant generation, there is another even larger one that spends a significant amount of consumer goods and become a major force in the marketplace which is called the Generation Y or Millennials (1977-2000).

Millennials (Generation Y) is three times more the size of Generation X (1966-1976) and constitutes the largest market since baby boomers and will represent the half of the consumer population by 2020. Determining the specific factors that influence Millennials and their purchasing attitudes and patterns has become an important focus of consumer research as their potential spending power, the ability to be trendsetters, adoption to new products and potential for becoming a lifetime customer [12,13].

Millennials (Generation Y), are more homogeneous than older ones, due to the powerful levelling influence of the internet and social relations, which exposes young people the world over to the same cultural icons and lifestyle trends [3].

The cohort grew in the era of immense and dynamic changes in the society. During their coming-to-age period they were able to observe the dual-income household’s development and the increasing level of equality between genders, virtual employment opportunities [4].

Thus, millennials have captured the attention of researchers, media, and the food industry alike, as their tastes and preferences are increasingly shaping what is being purchased at the grocery store [10].

In the United States of America, Millennials represent 25% -27% of the population and own around one trillion dollars in direct purchasing power and in Europe they represent 23% of the population. Also, this generation cohort has the substantial impact on the older generations [11,13,2]

Factors such as increasing consumer awareness of food and health, improving access to information, and changes in working and social environments differentiate consumption and purchase patterns. The demand for high health and nutritional food products such as olive oil and consumer profile changes are the subject of these developments [6].

During the last decade, olive oil consumption has experienced a major breakthrough in the world, not only in producing countries but also among those who are not. Undoubtedly, this growth in consumption is a consequence of the consolidation of a cultural phenomenon established between the main producing countries (Spain, Italy and Greece), owing to the so-called Mediterranean diet; a food concept that provides important health benefits and of which olive oil is one of the main components. Indeed, the US ranks fourth in olive oil consumption after Italy, Spain and Greece. Among the EU non-producing countries of olive oil, Germany and the UK are the main consumers. Something similar is happening in China, where the demand for olive oil is expected to increase significantly in the next few years [7].

In the last 25 years, consumption of olive oil has increased by 73% worldwide and has risen to 3.295.911 tons in 2015. The main source of this increase in consumption is consumption increases in high-welfare countries such as Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom and Almaty, which are not producers of olive oil. Major producers and major consumers such as Italy, Spain and Greece did not increase or even decrease [5].

The increasing preference for olive oil worldwide denotes a change in consumer behavior, either by strengthening the role of it in their diet or by incorporating it in a novel way. During the purchase process, consumers form their preferences based on the best combination of attributes, evaluating the brands that are part of their evoked sets, or are considered important in terms of attributes such as price, country of origin, quality or design, among others [7].

Within the scope of the study, consumption behaviors and purchase attitudes of two generation cohorts (Millennials and Non-millennials) for olive oil were examined. In this respect, the consumption patterns of young consumers for olive oil, which is a traditional product, are examined by comparing with the older consumers and the future attitudes of this product are presented together with past experiences. In the analysis carried out, it was revealed the differences between consumers' purchasing places of olive oil, direct use of olive oil with different characteristics and factors affecting the purchase of olive oil.

## MATERIAL and METHODS

The main material of the study is the face-to-face consumer survey. The survey was conducted on May-June 2016 near by the supermarkets in the center of Adana province where consumers are concentrated and focused on purchasing behavior. In the questionnaire, different socio-economic and demographic structures were taken into consideration and thus the attempt to increase the representation ability of the questionnaire was tried. The sample size of the study was calculated by using the formula given below [9].

$$n = \frac{p(1-p)}{\left(\frac{e}{Z}\right)^2} \quad (1)$$

In this formula, n is the sample volume, p is the frequency of the observed event, e is the error ratio, and z is the confidence interval. Based on the highest value of p (1-p), the error margin e = 5% and the confidence interval 95% the sample size was assumed to as 381 people. It is planned that the survey will be applied to over 520 people, considering that there might be incomplete and incorrect questionnaire forms in our work. 500 of the questionnaires were used for evaluation and 420 individuals were determined as consuming olive oil. In the sample 110 individuals are millennial generation members and 310 non-millennial generations including generation X and baby boomers.

Percent distribution and Chi square methods were applied to the obtained data and these analyzes were performed in SPSS 2.1 program.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis of where millennial and non-millennial generations made olive oil purchases. Accordingly, the Chi-square test results for all the participants in the survey show that there are significant differences between the responses of different generations (p<0.01).

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage distribution values of olive oil purchase place and Chi-square test results

	All Generations		Millennials		Non-millennials	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Supermarket	118	35,1	35	35	31,8	36,7
Neighborhood grocery store	51	15,2	8	7,3	43	19,0
Friend or direct seller	102	30,4	51	46,4	51	22,6
Family-own production	64	19,0	16	14,5	48	21,2
Internet	1	,3			1	,4
Total	336	100,0	110	100,0	226	100,0
Chi-Square	607,446**		75,364**		368,876**	

(p<0,01)

Table 1 shows the analysis of the place of purchase for olive oils, where both groups used supermarkets intensively (36.7% non-millennials and %35 millennials). Neighborhood small grocery is preferred more by non-millennial generation than the millennials. On the other hand, millennial generation uses the option of purchasing olive oil from friends or directly from producers more (46.4%) than non-millennials. Buying from the Internet does not apply to both groups.

In our study, consumptions for direct use of olive oils (Riviera / refined, natural exudation and private / gourmet) in different specifications were examined (Table 2). Accordingly, significant differences were found between the responses given in the Chi square test (p <0,01).

**Table 2.** Direct consumption situations of olive oils in different specifications

Direct Consumption						
	TOTAL		Millennials		Non-millennials	
	f	%f	f	%f	f	%f
Riviera / refined	19	9,7	8	12,3	11	8,4
Virgin	58	29,6	19	29,2	39	29,8
special / gourmet	119	60,7	38	58,5	81	61,8
Total	196	100,0	65	100,0	131	100,0
Chi-Square	165,592**		48,538**		117,641**	

When Table 2 is examined, it is understood that, both generations cohorts have a concentration of consumption towards special / gourmet products. This is followed by virgin and riviera / refined olive oils, respectively.

Within the scope of the research, the reactions of different generations were examined against the factors that could affect the purchase of olive oil (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Effects of some factors on olive oil purchase for different generation cohorts

AGE		Purpose of Usage	Quantity	Brand	Packaging	Consistency	Price	Expiration Date
Millennials	Mean	5-3,74	6-3,64	4-3,91	7-3,50	2-4,53	3-4,45	1-4,73
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
	Std. Deviation	1,089	,946	,808	1,210	,854	,797	,662
Non-millennials	Mean	6-3,48	5-3,91	4-4,12	7-3,43	2-4,69	3-4,13	1-4,83
	N	225	224	225	224	226	224	225
	Std. Deviation	,959	,853	,903	1,154	,549	1,122	,606
Total	Mean	3,57	3,82	4,05	3,46	4,64	4,23	4,79
	N	335	334	335	334	336	334	335
	Std. Deviation	1,009	,892	,877	1,171	,668	1,037	,626
Test Statistics								
		Purpose of Usage	Quantity	Brand	Packaging	Consistency	Price	Expiration Date
Mann-Whitney U		10544,000	10383,000	10381,500	11871,500	11653,000	10819,000	11476,000
Wilcoxon W		35969,000	16488,000	16486,500	37071,500	17758,000	36019,000	17581,000
Z		-2,315	-2,477	-2,559	-,557	-1,185	-2,018	-1,824
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,021	,013	,011	,578	,236	,044	,068
a. Grouping Variable: AGE								

As a result of the Mann-Whitney U test conducted to compare the factors affecting olive oil purchase, the difference between use quantity, quantity, brand, and price factors are all important for the millennium and non-millennium generations.

When the mean values are examined, it has been determined that the millennium generation members give more importance to the purpose of use, while the non-millennials give more importance to the quantity, brand and price factors. Packaging and consistency factors are important for both two generation cohorts, but there is no significant difference between generations

## CONCLUSION

For many type of goods, expectations of the Millennial generation members are different from those of previous generations, and marketers will need to rethink on their products, brands, business models, and marketing strategies accordingly [1]

Food is a particular phenomenon for Generation Y. They differ from Generation X, who are primarily looking for tra-

ditional food, and the Baby Boomers, who seek enjoyment in simple meals rather than variety). Food for Millennials is a complicated matter, since they grew in the era of technological revolution, with a broad range of choices and accesses to foreign cuisines. Consequently, they seek to have new experiences in food. Moreover, the Millennials have a potential to influence the eating habits of previous generations [4]. Market analysis has shown that this generation is demanding healthier and fresher items [10]

The results of the research also show that olive oil is a traditional product and that there are similarities between the millennium generation and the non-millennials in terms of consumption and purchasing behaviors. It has been determined that the millennial generation preferred supply the olive oil from producers and friends in terms of the purchase place of olive oil. It has also been determined that the millennial generation does not prefer the neighborhood groceries in purchasing olive oil. Generally, this generation does not prefer to buy satin at the neighborhood grocery stores for food purchase activities. While in olive oil purchase, these two generations use the supermarkets extensively on

olive oil internet is not used neither millennials nor the non-millennials.

In the case of direct use of olive oil, it was determined that both generation groups prefer intensely special / gourmet olive oils. This result is mainly due to own production usage and supply directly from the producer's opportunities in Cukurova Region. The low use of riviera / refined olive oils in direct use indicates that consumers have higher levels of consciousness in consumption of olive oil.

When the factors affecting the purchase of olive oil are examined, there are differences between the answers of two generation cohorts for the factors purpose of usage, quantity, brand and price factors, and the responses of other factors are similar for two cohorts. Accordingly, the millennium is more important for generational use purposes (cooking, direct use, use in salads) whereas non-millennium generation gives more importance to quantity, brand and price than millennium generation.

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