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A hedonic price analysis of PDO caciocavallo cheese and competitors

The Italian dairy sector is well-known for the variety and quality of its products with nearly 500 types of cheese, including 56 cheeses with Geographical Indications (53 PDO, 2 PGI and 1 TSG cheeses). *Pasta filata* cheeses take a consistent share of the supply chain; they are made from cow, goat or sheep milk, and originate from the Northern areas of the Mediterranean Region, including Italy, Greece, Turkey, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe (De Angelis and Gobbetti, 2011). *Caciocavallo* is one of the most popular *pasta filata* cheeses among consumers; the term refers to a wide range of semi-hard cheeses, including those from Italy (caciocavallo Silano, Podolico, Molisano, Pugliese, Corleonese, etc.), the Balkans (Kashkaval Balkan) and Russia (kashkaval) (Vacca et al., 2024).

Currently, there is lack of studies that analyse the role of different attributes in influencing the price of *caciocavallo cheese*. Therefore, this study intends to explore the market of this food product using an approach that highlights how prices vary according to certain attributes, which can differentiate *caciocavallo cheese* from the market competitors. In particular, a focus group was carried out with actors involved in the supply chain, who identified 12 relevant attributes influencing the price of this cheese. Subsequently, 118 observations, including the prices and attributes of *caciocavallo cheese*, were directly collected in Apulia region (Southern Italy) from different retailers, such as supermarkets, discount stores, local markets, specialized and e-commerce shops, and direct purchase by the producer. Then, the hedonic price method (De Meo et al., 2022) was applied by setting the price of the packaged product as dependent variable and the 12 attributes as independent variables.

The preliminary results highlighted that the most statistically significant attribute that influenced the price of *caciocavallo cheese* was the sale by e-commerce shops, which determined a positive price variation of 33%, everything else remaining constant. On the contrary, the second most significant attribute was the sale by specialised shops that determined a negative price variation of 20%. Regarding the certification attributes, neither DOP nor organic certifications affected the price variation. Based on the obtained results, possible strategies may be identified and adopted by producers of *caciocavallo cheese* to make this product more competitive. Further research is needed to increase the number of observations and improve the reliability of the analysis.

Bibliographic references

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