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[Zoi C. Kalyva](#) , [Ioanna. S. Kosma](#) ^{*} , [Dimitris Skalkos](#) ^{*}

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Article

Young Consumers' Price Perceptions in Purchasing Foods: Evidence from Greece

Zoi C. Kalyva, Ioanna S. Kosma and Dimitris Skalkos *

Laboratory of Food Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of Ioannina, 45110 Ioannina, Greece, zoikal/uoioi.gr (Z.C.K.); i.kosma@uoioi.gr (I.S.K.)

* Correspondence: dskalkos@uoioi.gr; Tel.: +302651008345

Abstract: The recent consecutive economic and social crises impose sustainable “from farm to fork” food chain management to feed the global population. In this study we investigate young consumers (Gen Z) price perceptions in purchasing foods in Greece to find out the determinants ensuring sustainable, future food consumption. We used 8 overall price perceptions determinants, 5 with negative roles namely value & price consciousness, coupon & sales proneness, price mavenism and 3 with positive roles namely price-quality, price-value, and prestige-sensitivity for the formation of the study's questionnaire. A total of 514 students (Gen Z by 85%) answered the questionnaire, promoted through the Google platform during September and October 2023. Data was analyzed with statistical tools, combining cross and chi-square tests. Between the negative determinants the “value consciousness” price perceptions (71.02%) were the most important parameters in purchasing food, followed by “price consciousness” (55.02%) parameters. “Coupon proneness” by 48.4% and “sales proneness” by 49% parameters were equally lower to the participants' references, while “price mavenism” parameters were minimally preferred by only 26.4% by the participants. Participants exhibited major preference for “value to price” interconnection (66.7%) such as for good value for money, value exceeding its price, overvalued low priced foods, while their preference for “quality to price” interconnection was significantly lower (48.8%) such as for getting what you pay, more money for better quality, priced quality foods. The “prestige- sensitivity” price perception was out of their preference for food purchase (only 7.1%). Our findings indicate that young consumers (Gen Z) pay more attention to the value negative and positive parameters concerning price perceptions for food purchase rather than quality, coupons & sales, low price, and mavenism or even prestige of the foods. This means that value issues such as the perceived environmental impact (green value), the climate crisis, the social signaling potential and others are high in their concerns for their future including their price perceptions for food purchase.

Keywords: food choice motives (FCM); value consciousness; price consciousness; sales & coupon proneness; price mavenism; value-price; quality-price; generation Z (Gen Z)

1. Introduction

Daily lifestyle habits have changed in a significant manner due to the global burden of COVID-19 which continues to redefine parts of our daily habits [1]. Changes vary from country to country and include among others time spent with family, physical activity, office work, sleeping behavior, mental health, eating habits etc. Changes have been recorded in the food choice motives (FCM) of consumers too as exploited by recent literatures which have systematically been reviewed by our group last year [2]. Preferences on FCM, namely health – convenience – sensory appeal – nutritional quality – moral concerns – weight control – mood – familiarity – price – shopping frequency behavior, in the new era are contradictory, depending on the age, the country, the sex, the culture of the studied consumers [2]. Changes due to the pandemic are still under way therefore definite answers defining the “new” index of consumer satisfaction can't be given yet for a food consumption “from farm to fork” process, which is an important aspect of sustainable development, especially due to new global crises caused by the wars [3]. The “farm to fork” agri-food chain's hidden, external costs of \$12 trillion

illustrates the need to make the food process more sustainable to overcome the planetary boundaries responsible to climate crisis, and biodiversity loss [4].

Since young generation is the “future” consumers forming the future index of food satisfaction, we exploited the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students of Greece regarding FCM for a sustainable eating behavior [5]. Most college students (18 to 32 years old) are by far youngsters of the newest generation Z (12-28 years old), very different from earlier generations in terms of their preferences and characteristics, shaping the global future in a unique way, including the food consumption [6]. We found that students have already returned to their motives for food selection of the period before COVID, for most of the 10 parameters studied, except for “home-cooked food” now ranked higher to their preferences, avoiding “eating at restaurants”, or “eating fast food” ranked lower to their preferences. The “shopping frequency” which changed during the pandemic has now returned to the preferences of the pre-pandemic period. The study showed that the motive which continues to be at the highest concern for students before and after the pandemic is price, with students looking for value for money, not expensive, and cheap price for their food selection [5].

Literature Review

The marketing literature for a long time now has shown that consumer knowledge, including price, plays an important role in purchase behavior [7–9]. Price is an important factor in food choice, especially for low – income consumers [10], who are significantly more conscious of value and price than higher income consumers [11]. The most attractive strategies, according to the consumers’ opinion so far, are discounting healthy food more often and applying a lower VAT (value added tax) rate on them. Pricing strategies (e.g. price reductions/increases, the “buy one get two” strategy, bonus systems etc.) are seen as a promising approach because sales promotions form an important part of the marketing mix [12,13]. Two systematic reviews on the effects of price perceptions and consumer shopping behavior highlight the importance of assessing possible different parameters of pricing strategies on dietary behaviors, and the limited evidence available addressing these parameters [14,15]. Investigating if pricing interventions differentially affect subgroups of the population is important, especially studying new generations such as Gen Z, since these interventions may alter their food disparities [14,16]. The consumers’ pricing perceptions may differ across socio-economic positions or person-related factors such as Body Mass Index and sex [17,18]. Up to date limited research results have been published on the potential differential effects of pricing attitudes by personal characteristics including targeted subgroups, impulsivity, decision – making styles, price sensitivity and food choice motives [19]. Even though price sensitivity is related to individuals’ decision-making process, evidence show that individuals who highly evaluate “health”, “natural content”, and “weight control” tend to purchase foods with high price compared to individuals that find these motives of less importance [19].

Currently studies are targeting trust and consumers’ acceptance of food products incorporating the social and environmental costs in the price of the food “True price food products” [20]. Consumers show interest in the true food pricing, even though there are concerns that many of them might not be able to afford to pay the true prices. The more consumers perceive to gain value from true food pricing that pertain to social status and green value (positive environmental impact), the greater the consumers’ trust in true pricing characteristics and in organizations that implement true pricing and therefore the higher the consumers’ intention to purchase true price foods [21]. True pricing brings food’s market prices and true costs of food production at the same level [22] pushing the food industry to come up with more beneficial externalities in the food production and to provide more transparency about the true price or even charge for it [23].

Recent studies show that the current continuing global economic crises are causing increase prices on all economic activities [24]. Not only the agricultural products of the farm to fork chain are dramatically affected [25], but also the food prices [26], with a constantly increased so far inflation worldwide [27]. Therefore, studying youngsters’ (Gen Z) price perceptions in purchasing their foods is an urgent research topic towards shaping the future of the sustainable “farm to fork” food chain in such turbulence periods.

In this study, we exploited the Greek students’ responses about their perceptions on food price when they decide to choose their food today. To accomplish this research, according to the literature on food pricing [28], our work tests the following determinants, regarding purchasing food:

Determinants with Negative role of price on food selection:

- Value consciousness
- Price consciousness
- Coupon consciousness
- Sales proneness
- Price mavenism (maven)

Determinants with positive role of price in food selection:

- Price – quality
- Value – price
- Prestige - sensitivity

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data Collection and Sample Characterization

A questionnaire was prepared to investigate the students’ food price perceptions; it was composed of nine parts (Table S1). The social/demographic characteristics of the respondents were obtained in the first part (gender, age, civil state, employment status, and permanent residency). Parts 2–8 consisted of four questions each designed to assess the perceptions of students regarding their consciousness on value, price, coupon proneness, sales proneness, price mavenism, price-quality relation, and the value-price relation, while part 9 consisted of eight questions regarding the prestige-sensitivity relation.

The initial testing of the questionnaire as well as the method used for its distribution was conducted as described by Skalkos et al. in the first paper regarding students’ questionnaire [5].

The survey took place during the period September to October 2023. The research was conducted through the online Google Forms distributed to the students of the University of Ioannina, Greece which has seven schools, fifteen departments covering all subjects matters, and more that 30,000 active students from all over Greece. GDPR approval was granted by the University’s bureau of personal data protection and the students were conducted afterwards through their academic e-mails. In the survey responded 514 students of the University, constituting 1,7% of the total 30.000 students that was the survey population.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characterization of the sample.

Variable	Groups	%
Gender	Male	27.9
	Female	72.1
Age	18-20	46.7
	21-25	33.7
	26-30	8.1
	31-35	11.4
Civil state	Single	89.5
	Married	7.9
	Divorced	2.6
Job situation	Employed student	70
	Student exclusively	30
Permanent resident of the Epirus’ region	NORTH GREECE (regions of Macedonia – Thrace)	27.5
	WEST GREECE (region of Epirus – Aitoloakarnania prefecture)	35.4
	CENTRAL GREECE (including Athens)	24.2
	SOUTH GREECE (region of Peloponnese)	6.1

In terms of geographical distribution, participants were 35.4% permanent residents of west Greece, 27.5% of north Greece, 24.2% residents of Central Greece, 6.8% residents of the Greek islands, and 6.1% of South Greece covering a well-balanced national distribution based o the population of each region. Most of the participants were age between 18–20 and 21-25 years old (46,7% and 33.7% respectively), and less between 26-30, and 31-35 years (8.1% and 11.4% respectively). Therefore, the generation Z of youngsters (18-28 years old) exceeded more than 85% of the participants. Regarding the employment status category, exclusively students (89.5%) dominated the respondents which is also representative status for the Gen Z population.

2.2. Data Analysis

The questionnaire was built up on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important, 2 = less important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = quite important, and 5 = very important) [29] to measure the students’ perception on price. Statistical treatment of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 25.0, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA), as described by Skalkos et al. [30].

3. Results

The results of the negative role of price perceptions on food purchase answered by the participants of the study are presented in **Table 2**. As shown, based on the quite and very important answers, the most important negative price determinant for food purchase is the “value consciousness” for which it is quite or very important the “worth for money” selection criteria (77.7%), followed by the “shopping around” for lower prices (71.9%), the connection between “quality and low price” (69.1%), and least the “price per Kg” (65.4%) between the available foods for purchase.

The second important determinant is “price consciousness” for which it is quite or very important for the participants that the food they purchase helps them “save money by finding low prices” (79.6%), followed by “the time that takes to find lower prices” (49.9%), and to less extend “shopping in more stores for lower prices” (46.4%), and “not to go extra effort to find lower prices” (44.2%).

The third important determinant for the participants has been “coupon proneness” for which it is very and quite important “enjoying using coupons regarding the saving of money” (57.2%), followed by “redeeming coupons to feel good” (51.2%), “the feeling of getting a good deal with the coupons” (50.8%) and to less extend enjoying clipping coupons of different sources (34.6%).

The fourth important determinant, almost equal to the third one, has been “sales proneness” for which it is quite or very important for the participants that “the food to be on sale” (72.9%), followed by “the selection of the food brand to be on sale” 61.6%), and to less extend “the selection of food brand regarding the sales status” (42.1%), or “the negative attitude for food brand on sale” (29.9%).

The fifth negative important determinant, by far the last one in the participants’ price perceptions has been “price mavenism” for which it is quite and very important for the students “searching for information in advance about prices” for different types of food only by 34.3%, “asking expert for food prices” by 28.7%,or “being well informed over food prices” by 26.7%, and least “trust the internet for food prices” by 26.1%t.

Table 2. Young consumers’ perceptions of the negative role of price on food selection regarding consciousness on value and price, proneness on coupon and sales, and price mavenism.

THE NEGATIVE ROLE OF PRICE IN PURCHASING FOOD
PREFERENCE REGARDING VALUE CONSCIOUSNESS ON PURCHASING FOOD

How important is for your purchase of FOOD	Not at all important	Less important	Moderately important	Quite important	Very important
The low prices in connection with the food quality	2.8*	7.3	20.9	37.2	31.9
The “shopping around” for lower prices of food	0.8	6.1	21.3	40.2	31.7
The “worth of money” selection criteria	0.6	4.1	17.6	41.4	36.3
The comparison of the “price per Kg” between the available foods for purchase	3.1	9.8	21.6	37.6	27.8
PREFERENCE REGARDING PRICE CONSCIOUSNESS ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
Not to go to extra effort to find lower prices.	10.2	16.5	28.9	28.5	15.7
To shop to more than one store to take advantage of low prices.	9.1	18.5	26.0	29.5	16.9
The time it takes to find low prices.	6.3	12.4	31.4	31.8	18.1
The money saved by finding low prices.	1.8	3.9	14.7	34.3	45.3
PREFERENCE REGARDING COUPON PRONENESS ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
To redeem coupons in order to feel good.	13.6	14.2	21.1	26.0	25.2
To enjoy clipping coupons out of different sources.	21.5	21.9	22.0	22.2	12.4
To feel you are getting a good deal using coupons.	13.4	14.8	21.1	29.5	21.3
To enjoy using coupons regarding the amount of money saved by doing so.	13.9	9.9	19.0	27.9	29.3
PREFERENCE REGARDING SALES PRONENESS ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
The food to be on sale.	2.0	5.1	20.1	33.7	39.2
The selection of the food brand because it is on sale.	2.2	11.2	25.1	36.5	25.1
The selection of the favor food brand regarding the sale status.	5.3	15.1	37.6	30.7	11.4
The negative attitude for purchasing food brand which are on sale.	26.8	26.2	27.2	15.2	4.7
PREFERENCE REGARDING PRICE MAVENISM ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
Searching for information in advance about prices for different types of food.	13.9	23.2	28.7	22.0	12.3
Being well informed constantly as an expert on the food prices.	19.2	26.1	28.1	17.0	9.7
Asking an expert that you know on food price before purchasing the food.	31.0	24.5	25.7	12.6	6.1
Trust the internet as the reliable source about the prices of foods.	20.0	25.7	28.1	18.4	7.7

* Values represent %.

Table S2 depicts the significant ($p < 0.05$) associations between participants' perceptions on negative food pricing determinants and sociodemographic variables. Specifically, regarding the topic of value consciousness, associations were observed between gender, age, civil state, job situation and residency [connection of low prices and food quality: age ($x^2 = 23.672$, $p = 0.023$), comparison of the “price per Kg” between the available foods : gender ($x^2 = 12.739$, $p = 0.013$), age ($x^2 = 35.417$, $p = 0.000$),

job situation ($\chi^2=13.930$, $p=0.008$), the price convenience topic showed significant associations between age, job situation and residency [no extra effort to find lower prices : job situation ($\chi^2=11.050$, $p=0.026$), shop to more than one stores to find lower prices: gender ($\chi^2=11.106$, $p=0.025$), saving money by finding lower prices : job situation ($\chi^2=13.405$, $p=0.009$), residency ($\chi^2=26.649$, $p=0.046$)]. The coupon proneness showed statistically significant associations ($p < 0.05$) between gender and residency [redeem coupons to feel good: residency ($\chi^2=26.255$, $p=0.050$), enjoy clipping coupon from different sources :residency ($\chi^2=27.667$, $p=0.035$), feeling getting a good deal : residency ($\chi^2=29.751$, $p=0.019$) and enjoy using coupons regarding the amount of money saved by doing so : gender ($\chi^2=11.214$, $p=0.024$), residency ($\chi^2=26.308$, $p=0.050$)], while sales proneness topic showed associations with the most of the sociodemographic variables [food on sale : gender ($\chi^2=18.123$, $p=0.001$), age ($\chi^2=26.593$, $p=0.009$), selection of a food brand on sale : gender ($\chi^2=15.402$, $p=.004$), residency ($\chi^2=27.623$, $p=0.035$), selection of the favor food brand regarding the sale status: gender ($\chi^2=10.130$, $p=0.038$), negative attitude for purchasing food brand which is on sale :civil state ($\chi^2=31.716$, $p=0.000$)]. Finally, the price mavenism topic showed associations between the sociodemographic variables regarding the trust on internet as a reliable source about the prices of foods: gender ($\chi^2=11.729$, $p=0.019$), age ($\chi^2=27.213$, $p=0.007$), and residency ($\chi^2=39.460$, $p=0.001$).

The results of the positive role of price on food selection and purchase answered by the participants of the study are presented in **Table 3**. The most important determinant has been the “value – price” interconnection for which it is quite or very important for the participants to get “good value for money food” by 80.6%, “not an undervalued food because of its low price” by 72.2%, “value exceeding its price” by 60.3%, and “price base on foods’ exact value) by 53.8%.

The second important determinant has been the “quality-price” interconnection for which it is quite or very important for the participants to “pay a bit more for the best food” by 57.9%, “get a price indicator of the food’s quality” by 53.5%, “get what you pay for” by 49.7%, and least “get higher price with higher quality” only by 34.2%.

The third and least important determinant has been the “prestige-sensitivity” interconnection for which all questions had very low percentage of quite or very importance for the participants such as “feeling better buying high-priced food brand” by 11.5%, “enjoying the prestige of buying high-priced food brand” by 11.5%, “having friends considering you cheap buying constantly lower priced versions of food” by 9.1%, “feeling classy buying the most expensive food brand” by 8.9%, ‘paying attention when buying the most expensive food brand” by 5.8%, “buying the specific food brand based on the judgement of the other will make about you” by 3.7%, “buying the most expensive food brand for the friends’ attention” by 3.5%, and “selecting a costly food brand since it is impressive” by 3%.

Table 3. Young consumers’ perceptions of the positive role of price on food selection regarding the connections of price-quality, value-price, and prestige-sensitivity.

THE POSITIVE ROLE OF PRICE IN PURCHASING FOOD					
PREFERENCE REGARDING THE PRICE – QUALITY ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD	Not at all important	Less important	Moderately important	Quite important	Very important
The higher the price of a food the higher its quality.	9.4*	21.0	35.4	19.3	14.9
The common phrase “you get what you pay for” to be generally true.	4.9	16.7	28.7	31.4	18.3
The price of a food to be a good indicator of its quality.	5.5	15.7	25.3	28.5	25.0
The extra money you must pay a bit more for the best food.	3.6	11.5	27.1	35.0	22.9
PREFERENCE REGARDING THE VALUE – PRICE ON PURCHASING FOOD					

How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
To be priced based on its exact value.	3.0	13.0	30.2	34.5	19.3
To be a “good value for money” food.	0.6	4.1	14.7	40.8	39.8
To have a value exceeding its price.	4.3	8.3	27.2	33.9	26.4
Not to be undervalued because of its low price.	2.9	4.7	20.2	40.6	31.6
PREFERENCE REGARDING THE PRESTIGE – SENSITIVITY ON PURCHASING FOOD					
How important is for your purchase of FOOD					
To pay attention when you buy the most expensive brand of a food.	42.5	31.8	19.9	3.7	2.1
To feel better buying a high-priced food brand.	38.8	30.2	19.5	8.2	3.3
To feel classy buying the most expensive food brand.	58.7	20.9	11.5	6.0	2.9
To enjoy the prestige of buying a high-priced food brand.	53.4	22.6	12.5	8.0	3.5
To have your friends considering you are cheap if you consistently buy the lower priced version of a food.	64.1	20.5	6.2	5.8	3.3
To buy the most expensive food brand just because your friends will notice it.	78.6	14.4	3.5	2.1	1.4
To buy the kinds of foods and food brands based on the judgments the others will make about you because of the specific selections.	78.0	13.8	4.5	2.1	1.6
To select a costly food brand versus a relatively inexpensive food since it is impressive.	81.1	12.7	3.3	1.6	1.4

* Values represent %.

In **Table S3** can be found the statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) associations between participants' perceptions on the remaining topics of the food pricing questionnaire and sociodemographic variables. Regarding the connection price-quality significant associations were found between civil state and gender [the higher the price of a food the higher its quality: civil state ($\chi^2 = 17.232$, $p = 0.028$), the common phrase “you get what you pay for” to be generally true: civil state ($\chi^2 = 16.786$, $p = 0.032$), and the extra money that must pay a bit more for the best food: gender ($\chi^2 = 12.790$, $p = 0.012$). the connection value-price showed significant associations for two of the questions with the sociodemographic variables [to be priced based on its exact value: age ($\chi^2 = 25.368$, $p = 0.013$), and residency ($\chi^2 = 26.675$, $p = 0.045$), to be a “good value for money” food: civil state ($\chi^2 = 18.174$, $p = 0.020$)]. Finally, for the connection between prestige sensitivity the significant association were the following: between paying attention when you buy the most expensive brand of a food with age ($\chi^2 = 30.044$, $p = 0.003$), between feeling better buying a high-priced food brand with age ($\chi^2 = 23.711$, $p = 0.022$), and between feeling classy buying the most expensive food brand and age ($\chi^2 = 22.745$, $p = 0.030$), and civil state ($\chi^2 = 15.391$, $p = 0.050$).

4. Discussion

The results presented above indicate that young consumers price perceptions for the purchase of their foods vary depending on the determinant (parameter) chosen for the food selection.

Between the negative determinants the “value consciousness” price perception on purchasing food was the most important parameter for the participants of the study (average 71,02% of quite and very important answers based on the 5 questions included in the questionnaire). Our results agree with reported literature indicating that initial value sources can potentially contribute to promoting trust and consumer acceptance for true pricing of foods [21]. Wikstrom et al reports that often consumers biggest problem is how to integrate available resources and to make trade-offs between different value dimensions in a way to contribute to a good price food [31].

The second important negative determinant based on participants answers has been “price consciousness” provided an average of 55,02% quite and very important answers. The importance of low pricing has been addressed by Ashkan et al who systematically reviewed existing literature of the prospective impact of food pricing on improving food consumption (an action that follows the purchase of foods) [32]. They indicated that, according to existing literature, 10% decrease in price of food increases consumption by 12%, and 10% increase in price decreases consumption by 6%.

The two determinants with equal negative importance for price perceptions recorded, third and fourth in a row, have been “coupon proneness” by 48.4% average quite and very important answers, and “sales proneness” by 49% average similar answers by the participants. Our results agree with the findings of Yen-Ting et al [33] who studied the effects of price discounts and bonus packs together by the consumers. The authors report that either for vice foods (pearl milk tea) or virtue foods (sugar free tea) a price discount is as effective as a bonus pack. They contended that consumers would prefer a price discount when purchasing pearl milk tea, but a bonus pack when purchasing sugar free tea.

Last negative price determinant for the participants’ preference for food purchase with very low percentage of average quite and very important answers was “price mavenism” by only 26.4%. Feick and Price introduced the concept of market mavenism (MM) to describe a unique pattern of consume behaviour whereby a minority of retail consumes disproportionately influences the behaviour of other consumers [34]. Goldsmith et al have shown that mavenism is positively associated with brand engagement in self-concept, status consumption, and materialism [35]. Somers et al studied the association of mavenism and pleasure with food involvement in older adults and found that food mavenism and pleasure motivation are stronger predictors of food involvement than demographic factors [36].

From the three determinants with positive role to price perceptions recorded by the young participants the most important has been “value-price” by an average of 66.7% of quite and very important answers to the 4 questions asked. The importance of value to price connection by consumers for food purchase has been emphasized by many scholars so far [37–40]. Taufik et al recently studied consumer value for true price food products and found that value sources can potentially contribute to promoting consumer acceptance for true pricing in the food domain, with various other factors being relevant as well [21].

The determinant with second positive importance for the young consumers on purchasing food recorded has been “quality-price” by an average of 48.8% of quite and very important answers significantly lower than the “value-price” answers. Food quality as a major parameter for consumers’ food perception has been studied extensively for more than 20 years [41,42]. Studies are focusing recently on purchase decisions based on quality and price for selected foods such as fast food [43], organic food [44] and others. Nabila and Tambunan recently indicate that customers in making purchases are influenced by the quality of food, services levels, prices and the store environment [45]. Our results indicate however that value assets are much more important than quality for price perceptions in food purchasing for the young consumers which may include assets such as the perceived positive environmental impact (green value), the social signalling potential [21], and others.

The determinant with no positive importance on purchasing food by the young consumers of our study has been the “prestige-sensitivity” with a low 7.1% average quite and very important

answers. Based on the 8 questions used in this parameter and the answers received young consumers do not pay attention to high cost, most expensive, high priced, costly brands on purchasing their food even when they are persuaded by their friends. Even though personal branding is highly important for Gen Z youngsters for their own activities [46,47], apparently it is not important for their food choice, even when it has to do with specific food brand-groups such as halal foods [48].

5. Conclusions

Generation Z, or Gen Z, represents 24% of the U.S. population, with a higher proportion of them earning college degrees currently [6]. They are now moving to the next phase in which they will constitute the predominant majority of the incoming workforce bringing a distinct set of characteristics into the work and market place, including the purchase and consumption of foods. The current work on young consumers' perceptions is the first study ever which systematically examines Gen Z' price determinants in purchasing foods. It is the research extension of our earlier findings indicating students' preference for value for money, inexpensive, and cheapness foods as part of their food choice motives [5].

Our current findings indicate that youngsters are positively affected primarily by the "value to price" interconnection for the food they buy, and secondarily by the "quality to price" relationship. Interestingly, they don't purchase expensive, high-priced food brands neither as a prestigious, impressive projection for friends, nor as a prompt from friends.

On the other hand, our findings show that youngsters are negatively affected by the "value consciousness" of the food price they select shopping around for worth of money, low priced, and priced per Kg foods. Secondarily, they pay attention to the "price consciousness" of foods evaluating the time they spend, the extra effort they take, the stores they visit, and the money they save searching for the lowest price of each food. Interestingly, they are not affected by "Coupon and sales proneness" as much as expected, such as redeeming coupons, or selecting food brands on sale, except for getting food and food brands on sale. Lastly, "price mavenism" is the price perception which doesn't interest the young participants of this study significantly affected minimally by the advanced information, and experts' opinion before purchasing foods.

The main constrain of the study is most of the female young participants which is however typical for most of the related studies targeting male and female public equally. The limitation also to the Greek Gen Z participants is another constrain of the study which should be performed in other countries as well comparing the results among them.

This research is bringing not only quite managerial and policy implication for marketing but also theoretical contribution for marketing researchers studying Gen Z behavior. The results are very helpful for food industry, and those organizations who participate in the farm to fork process overall ensuring successful to the market foods. With this research work the industry has the first indication of the future adults' price perceptions for their food purchase in order to be prepared in advance for the foods of the near future for them.

Future research as a continuation of the current study will include, examining youngsters' price perceptions to selected groups of daily purchased foods such as dairy, fruits and vegetables etc. and investigating further the various determinants affecting the value to price and value consciousness on purchasing foods since value appears to be the most important criteria of choice.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at the website of this paper posted on Preprints.org, Table S1: Questionnaire Food price perception by Greek students for sustainable food consumption, Table S2: Associations between students' perception on food pricing regarding value and price consciousness, coupon and sales proneness and price mavenism and the sociodemographic variables, Table S3: Associations between students' perception on food pricing regarding the connections of price-quality, value-price and prestige-sensitivity and the sociodemographic variables.

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