

Annex 2

WP4 post-Florence Work Plan

**Angela Tregear, Franco Torelli,
Mitchell Ness**

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17/10/01

Objectives of Remainder of Work for WP4

An overview has already been conducted of the link between OLPs and consumers/citizens by each participant in the work package. This overview has identified many gaps in knowledge and understanding. Therefore, the remainder of WP4 involves two kinds of task. First, to gather further information on these gaps (where possible). Second, as researchers, to develop our thoughts and ideas on the key problematic themes we have identified in the topic, and to offer propositions on how to tackle these areas in future.

Important things to bear in mind when working on the themes below...

- we need to remind ourselves to think of people as 'citizens' rather than just as 'consumers'. We need to think also what are the effects of this change in mentality.
- our thoughts and ideas should derive from our observation and understanding of OLPs and consumers/citizens in our own countries
- our main aim is to give our thoughts and ideas on OLPs and citizens/consumers in general. Sometimes, it is only possible to make progress by thinking about particular groups and products. If it is the latter, then nevertheless we should try to project our final thoughts and conclusions towards a more general scheme, relating them to the 'bigger picture'.

The Key Themes

The themes are overlapping and interlinked, necessarily. It may be that in time, they will need to be rearranged! Also, the ideas and questions given in each one are guidelines rather than strict instructions, designed to stimulate thought patterns, not constrain them.

Theme 1. Research Methods

Questions to be addressed: what kind of research studies would you recommend to help understand OLP usage/consumption better? what questions should they be addressing? what propositions should they be testing? what data collection methods would be appropriate? If a 'blank cheque' was offered, what would be the preferred research design?

Within this topic, it may be helpful for participants to brainstorm a list of possible data collection tools and techniques, e.g.

multivariate analysis
factor analysis
cluster analysis
conjoint analysis
principle component analysis
means end chain analysis
hedonic pricing
contingent valuation
focus groups
in-depth interviews
participant observation
food diaries
scanner panel/sales data
projective methods
Delphi technique

...then put together proposals for what combination of methods would be ideal to answer the specific research questions about OLPs in your own country. E.g. some countries, very few studies undertaken, so perhaps more baseline projects would be valuable, in others, perhaps existing abundance of certain methods, so what novel approaches would be useful? Or perhaps there are specific outstanding questions arising from previous studies which should be tested in a particular way? In this theme, important to think also of studying OLP behaviour within the wider context of general food behaviour/lifestyles.

Proposed Outcome of this theme: specification of a set of well-designed research projects which would appropriately investigate the most pressing questions relating to OLP usage/consumption.

Theme 2. Conceptual Framework

Questions to be addressed: There are lots of existing assumptions about how citizens/consumers relate to OLPs... sometimes, a one-off luxury, other times, a deep commitment. How can these assumptions be turned into more clear or explicit conceptualisations or propositions about the relationship between citizens/consumers and OLPs?

Obviously, such conceptualisations may vary widely depending on:

- the country/context of the researcher, and own prior beliefs/knowledge about OLP usage in own country
- researchers' own disciplinary background, theoretical training and ontological leanings (what they think it is important to know about the relationship between consumers/citizens and OLPs)
- how the researcher believes it is possible to gather information about the relationship between consumers/citizens and OLPs (i.e. their epistemological leanings)

So for example, a sociologist may conceive of understanding OLPs within theories of food as social vehicle, or theories of reflexive consumption, networks and involvement, hedonism, or OLPs as identity badges. The conceptual framework might be a set of propositions about flows of meaning, beliefs, perceived satisfactions, relationships. An economist may conceive of OLP behaviour as a utilitarian trade off between costs and benefits. The conceptual framework might be a model of consumer/citizen and/or product attributes, geared towards identifying the link between different assortments and resulting attitudes.

Based on your disciplinary background and leanings, what conceptual framework would you propose to explain the relationship between OLPs and consumers/citizens in your own country?

Proposed Outcome of this theme: development of a small number of conceptual frameworks which offer alternative explanations of how OLP usage/consumption 'works'. The frameworks to be specified in such a way as to be ready for empirical testing. E.g. could be modification of a Grunert type model, or sociological framework. Again, the importance is emphasised of conceptualising OLP-specific behaviour within peoples' wider food habits and lifestyles.

Theme 3. Explaining OLP Behaviour

Questions to be addressed: from a marketing point of view, what kinds of factors most influence or explain OLP usage/consumption?

This theme is separated out as a result of our observations that 'classic' factors influencing food behaviour (e.g. geographic, demographic) may not be adequate to explain OLP behaviour. More sophisticated explanations are needed. Overall, this theme is based on the assumption that it is useful to think about OLP behaviour as being the result of different factor influences, but that these may go beyond the obvious. To tackle this theme, it may be helpful for participants brainstorm the different factors which may influence or explain OLP behaviour, e.g.

geographic
demographic
lifestyle
behavioural
benefits sought

and then think of ways in which different 'situations' of OLP usage could be classified. For example, compare the 'slow food' occasion with other types of occasion. Perhaps linking the above influences to different types of OLP, or aim to develop a citizen typology.

Proposed Outcome of this theme: a comprehensive listing of different factors influencing OLP usage/consumption, with propositions of how these might relate to one another. Potentially, development of a typology of OLP users/consumers, perhaps based on multi-factor clusters.

Theme 4. Communication

Questions to be addressed: given that a variety of stakeholders, from individual producers, to consortiums, to the EU (via PDO/PGI designations), have an interest in communicating with consumers/citizens about OLPs, what kinds of communications are likely to be most effective? Is it possible to offer a conceptualisation or model of the process? Within this, key questions are:

- who should be the source of communications (e.g. is a perceived local source more effective than a perceived 'central' source, such as the EU)?
- what messages and media are most appropriate? In particular, what should the substance, the key arguments, of messages be? E.g. 'civic' arguments that OLP usage helps rural areas? Or user-directed arguments that OLPs are tasty, healthy, good quality?
- how should communications differ according to the level of prior awareness of OLPs in different countries?
- should communications focus on raising awareness of PDOs, or building on the more 'complete package' of attributes OLPs, including the emotional?

Within this theme it is important to think of the impact of communications. How it is that citizens have discovered OLPs for the first time, why they go on to buy OLPs?

Proposed outcome of this theme: specification of different types of communication flows, perhaps in diagrammatic form, related to different types of OLP producer/user relationship. Alternative recommendations for executing effective communication strategies in practice.

Theme 5. the OLP Offering: Identity, Symbols and Benefits

Questions to be addressed: What do OLPs actually offer the citizen/consumer? Given that we have uncovered a variety of different benefits which may be attached to OLPs (and the concept of 'origin'), more thought is needed on how to conceptualise these better or more fully. Interested in particular in the symbolic or intangible benefits, and how these may relate to the tangible or physical. Within this theme, it might be helpful to:

- brainstorm the different associations of OLPs and 'origin' (e.g. exotic, luxury, healthy, trustworthy, farmer/landscape benefits).
- also to consider and reflect upon the meanings of these associations - what do things like 'origin', 'tradition' actually mean to people? The unspoken associations.
- what about potentially competing or conflicting attributes?
- also to think about what are the limitations or weaknesses of OLPs - how might they not correspond to the needs of consumers/citizens?
- overall, can a sophisticated typology of OLPs be developed based on assortments of symbolic attributes?

A second area involves thinking about how meanings are conveyed through labels and brands, and what the consequences are for the interactions between these. What are the identities which OLPs possess? May be helpful to brainstorm these, e.g. single producer mark, consortium brand, PDO label, simple statement of origin, production method/type. What are the consequences of these 'levels' of labelling or branding for perceived benefits? How do they interact or possibly conflict? What positive role do the PDO marks actually play in themselves? Can a typology of OLPs be developed based on the relative importance of different levels of territorial identification?

Proposed outcome of this theme: development of a more comprehensive understanding of what OLPs are and what they offer users/consumers. Perhaps development of a typology of OLPs, based on these attributes. Perhaps diagrammatic representation of how different levels of branding identity work or interact.