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**A NEW BEEF PRODUCT ADOPTION
MODEL FOR HOTELS AND MOTELS
IN GREATER MELBOURNE**

**A thesis in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Food Technology at
Massey University**

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of new beef products to foodservice is impeded by the lack of models for new product adoption by the foodservice industry and its product development process. The three aims of this research were to develop a model of the relationship between the developer and the adopter, to investigate the factors affecting the decision making process for new beef product adoption and to construct a model of the stages involved in the new beef product adoption process.

The stages involved in the new product adoption process were investigated during the development of new products by suppliers of different types of beef ranging from fresh to fully processed. This *'in vivo'* research method provided a means of monitoring the developer/adopter relationship through all stages of the new product adoption process. The research was with menu planning decision makers over twelve months and involved the development of two new beef products which were tested in consumer and chef trials. The same hotels and motels in Melbourne, Australia, were used in three surveys, 73 for the first, 48 for the second and 34 for the third.

The model of the developer/adopter relationship combined the new product adoption process with the new product development processes of the menu planning decision makers and the suppliers. The interfaces between the developer(supplier)/adopter and the adopter/developer(menu planning decision maker) were the key links between the new beef product adoption process and the two product development processes.

Factors important for new beef product adoption were: the developer/adopter relationship; the personnel involved, and; the product. Decision makers used few steps in menu planning and these did not involve documentation so emphasising the need for strong personal communications between developer and adopter. The most influential personnel throughout the entire process were the 'Chefs in Charge' who made up the majority of menu planning decision makers. Quality was found to be

the most critical benefit for all product types and the greatest critical risk was related to the chef's desire for peer recognition.

The new beef product adoption process had four stages:

- * Product Awareness and Interest;
- * Product Concept Evaluation;
- * Prototype Trial, and;
- * Product Adoption.

Awareness and interest were most likely to be raised by direct communication between supplier and adopter and were influenced by both supplier characteristics and loyalty. Evaluation of product concept benefits and risks were the basis for the product design specifications. At the prototype trial stage product benefits and risks influenced purchase intention. This signalled the beginning of the adoption stage, which is completed after post-purchase evaluation. Although the two new products were acceptable to both the menu planning decision makers and the consumers the menu planning decision makers preferred the fresh rather than the prepared ready-to-cook product indicating a need for new beef products to be compatible with products in current use. Thus, compatibility, and the appearance of continuous innovation, with existing products are recommended for the encouragement of new beef product adoption by foodservice.

This first model of the new product adoption process for foodservice not only incorporates factors common to previous industrial buying behaviour models but also identifies factors characteristic of foodservice operations and their new product development process, menu planning.

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