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ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR OF CONSUMERS TO MEAT

IN PALMERSTON NORTH, NEW ZEALAND

1979 - 1985

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Doctor of Philosophy in Product Development  
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## ABSTRACT

Consumer attitudes and behaviour towards meat products were studied as a basis for meat product development. Meat consumer studies have traditionally taken two distinctive approaches. Economists have tended to use demand analysis, concentrating on the effects of price, income, and family structure on the consumption of 'beef' or 'lamb' or other aggregated commodity. Market researchers have tended to concentrate on consumer requirements and attitudes, frequently ignoring price and income. The present study examined meat consumer behaviour from both perspectives and made a detailed study of some of the techniques using 15 meats and 41 meat cuts.

In consumer preferences, the use of a Semi-structured Linear Scale with the most-preferred and least-preferred meats anchored at either end of the scale and the remaining meats arranged along the scale at distances that reflected the consumers' preferences was equally effective at determining interval scale distances between meats as the traditional methods of measuring preferences, the Thurstone Case V Interval Scale. Also for Multidimensional Scaling, substitutability measurements were the most appropriate data measurements as the resulting solutions were stable, whilst the preference solutions tended to degenerate into unidimensional solutions. The study also showed that less predictable solutions resulted from MDS if substitutability measurements were made on meat cuts rather than at a species level. Fenker's and Krusdal et al.'s methods produced very similar ideal point solutions which were slightly different to solutions from a newly-developed method. The latter had the advantage of being able to identify the dimension most sensitive to changes in preference and to indicate whether an ideal point or vector model was the most appropriate method of determining new product opportunities in an MDS space.

Factor Analysis showed that it was possible to identify three main Factors underlying consumers' attitudes to meat in general. They included: a 'meat quality on buying' Factor; a 'meat quality on eating' Factor and a 'meat quality on cooking and serving' Factor. However, the study showed that the structure of the Factors changed depending on whether attitudes to meat in general, to specific cuts from each species

of meat, or individual cuts of meat were being examined. The use of Q-Factor Analysis to categorise meats on the basis of consumer attitudes showed that it was possible to categorise meats into 9 Hypothetical Product groupings based on the consumers' attitudes to the products. The groupings were shown to be based on the similarity of the attitude profiles of the cuts, cuts with similar profiles being grouped in the same Hypothetical Product.

Three quantitative regression models were developed for 41 meat cuts. The models showed that the situation was not quite as complex as other studies had indicated. Per capita consumption of meat was shown to depend on the price, preference and prestige ratings of a meat cut, i.e. a typical demand model. The model accounted for 61% of the variance in the dependent variable, substantially higher than other studies. Meat cut preference was shown to depend on the acceptability of the flavour, juiciness and presence of bone in the cut. The model typified a Fishbein/Rosenberg attitude model and accounted for 91% of the variance in the dependent variable.

The proportion of households buying model accounted for over 93% of the variance in the dependent variable and typified a demand model. All the predictor variables in the model were consumer attitudes. The model indicated that the proportion of households that would purchase a cut was dependent on the tenderness, value for money and perceived price of a cut.

The models indicated what had to be done to improve existing meat products and the areas that should be concentrated on for successful new meat product development.

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Brian Wilkinson,  
Palmerston North,  
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## PREFACE

Food product development is the procedure by which raw materials are selected, combined and then processed to produce a product that is acceptable to the final consumer. Twenty-five to thirty years ago, the number of food products on the shelves of supermarkets and corner dairy stores was small in comparison to the huge array of products that are available today. Consequently, in the past, it was possible to use a less systematic approach to product development than is the case today when the failure of a new product to meet its intended objectives can spell ruin for some firms or at best a down-turn in company profits for one or two years. It was common to see firms relying on intuition and experience in their development of new products. However, in today's world, where the risks of failure can be extremely damaging to a firm, more systematic and quantitative techniques have to be used to ensure a higher probability of success than one in forty (Booz and Allen, 1984). The Booz and Allen report stressed the need for a systematic product development programme for a company. The steps outlined in the report included:

- \* Development of a company strategy for new product development;
- \* Systematic product idea generation;
- \* Quantitative screening of product ideas;
- \* Initial feasibility analysis of the project;
- \* Development of product concepts;
- \* Consumer evaluation of the product concepts;
- \* Systematic and quantitative product formulation procedures;
- \* Consumer testing of products through development phases;
- \* Feasibility analysis of product and assessment of probability of success;
- \* Market testing of product;
- \* Evaluation of economics before decision for launch.

A number of quantitative techniques have been developed to aid the researcher in the various areas outlined above; these include:

- \* Market and product gap analysis using MDS to identify new product opportunities;

- \* Market evaluation based on Bayesian decision tree analysis or cost benefit analysis;
- \* Formulation based on linear and non-linear programming;
- \* Mixture designs and other experimental design techniques to aid with formulation and process design;
- \* Business analysis including market forecasts, market surveys and buyer simulation models.

The introduction of these techniques has been largely in a haphazard fashion. The Food Technology Department at Massey University has been carrying out a research programme with the specific aim of developing systematic and quantitative techniques for new food product design and development. The design of nutritional products for consumers in developing countries has been used as the basis for this programme. An overview of the programme is given by Edwardson, Anderson, Chittaporn, Ngaramsak and Earle (1985).

Edwardson provided an objective procedure for the selection of raw materials to be used in low cost nutritional products for the Philippines. The major problem encountered by Edwardson was the incompatibility of raw materials selected by linear programming based on nutritional criteria. It was only possible to produce an acceptable product from these raw materials through extensive processing and addition of flavouring ingredients.

Anderson (1975) complemented and extended Edwardson's work by devising a procedure whereby raw material selection was made on the basis of their predicted acceptability in Thai dishes. Anderson used similarity measurements which were then analysed by non-metric Multidimensional Scaling to derive the metric acceptability scale values for the 40 raw materials and the ideal point. These values were used to derive a linear function relating raw materials to food dish acceptability. This function was used in a linear programming model together with nutritional constraints to provide a systematic method of raw material selection for nutritious and acceptable Thai food dishes. The raw materials selected by the model showed a marked improvement over those chosen by the linear programme subject to only nutritional constraints. However, there were still problems with the selection of the raw materials as ingredients

for the new food products as the developed dishes did not have as high an acceptability rating as was expected from the model.

It was clear from Edwardson's and Anderson's work that further research was needed in the area of exactly defining the consumers' requirements for new food products and what raw materials they considered to be acceptable for inclusion in the new products, if the linear programming model was to be more effective in the development of acceptable new food products. Anderson had used an indirect method to obtain the acceptability ratings for the raw material ingredients rather than one of the traditional methods of ascertaining consumer requirements, such as the Semantic Differential. The question was then posed "Which of the two approaches, i.e. the indirect method of Anderson or the more traditional approach, is the most appropriate for the measurement of consumer requirements, given that the indirect methods can sometimes pick up important product attributes which may otherwise be missed by the traditional methods, particularly if the attributes happen to be symbolic or psychological?"

The object of this study was to compare the more traditional methods of obtaining consumer requirements and preferences, such as the Semantic Differential and the Thurstone Case V Interval preference scale, with the newer and less direct methods, such as non-metric Multidimensional Scaling and arrive at some conclusions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches and also some recommendations as to the best approach for new product development studies if the linear programming model was to be more successful for the development of new products.

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