"Social drivers" as predictors of yoghurt consumption in China

A Lowe  
*RMIT University*

Anthony Worsley  
*University of Wollongong, tworsley@uow.edu.au*

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers

Part of the Education Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

**Recommended Citation**

*Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers.* 1013.  
https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/1013

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
"Social drivers" as predictors of yoghurt consumption in China

Abstract
A survey of yoghurt consumption by female consumers in Beijing showed 42% consuming often, 26% occasionally and 32% never. Consumers were generally younger and more driven by materialistic values than non-consumers. "Social drivers" are presented as a 1001 for marketers to predict the use of consumer products.

Keywords
drivers, social, yoghurt, china, predictors, consumption

Disciplines
Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details
“Social drinkers” as predictors of yogurt consumption in China

A. Lowe & A. Worsley

A survey of yogurt consumption by female consumers in Beijing showed 42% consuming often, 26% occasionally and 32% never. Consumers were generally younger and more driven by materialistic values than non-consumers. “Social drinkers” are presented as a tool for marketers to predict the use of consumer products.

There has been much interest in the growth of food markets in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in East Asia (Brusson & Garrett 1996). It has been noted that consumers’ purchasing power in the People’s Republic of China is one of the most rapidly growing. Consumers represent approximately two-thirds of the spending power of the East Asia region including Japan. This sort of observation has generated considerable interest in the Australian and New Zealand business community.

With the introduction of reform in 1978, the PRC government has converted controlled monopoly into one that is market-based. This change has lifted the economic performance and standard of living for people in the PRC, particularly in the last ten years.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people are beginning to view the constraints of consumerism and are simultaneously pursuing cash and pleasure. For example, in Shanghai and Beijing, there are no shortages of privately owned, imported, luxury vehicles on the city streets, and many of these do not cost a lot. Foreign cars can be found in any major Western city. Exclusive disco and karaoke clubs, with high cover charges, are packed with young socialites who apparently want to have their own personal bottle of spirits labelled in racks above the bar. However, these factors have little impact on the social characteristics of consumers in the PRC, as these remain relatively unchanged.

The demographic information is useful in sketching the outlines of consumer markets, other information is usually needed for producers to market their products effectively. Several researchers have shown that values and lifestyles are important indicators of consumers. As referred to the social drinkers are important indicators of groups of consumers who are more likely than others to buy and consume particular products (Mitchell 1983, Holman 1984, Corfman & others 1991).

However, the factors which influence the purchase of food products are complex. These are relatively unknown. Grunert & others (1997) described and tested a Food Lifestyle model in Denmark which proposed a number of influences on food purchasing and consumption. Among them are consumers’ personal values and interest in shopping and cooking, as well as abstract and concrete perceptions of the product, such as its sensory appeal, and more tangible properties like price and quantity.

Even less is known about the influences of social drinkers’ attitudes, and the reasons for this cultural study we designed and tested a values inventory which could be used to measure Asian as well as Western consumers (Lowe & Corkindale 1998). This research indicated that the differences in attitudes and perceptions towards various marketing stimuli (eg advertising, sales promotion) between Westerners and Chinese are associated with differences in cultural value systems.

Unfortunately, however, the values which influence these attitudes and perceptions are more complex than just the differences in cultural values. While one set of values may influence attitudes and perceptions towards a particular marketing stimulus amongst Western consumers, there may be a totally different set of values for Chinese consumers for the same marketing stimulus. In other words, one cannot assume that the same set of values will influence two different groups of consumers’ responses to the same marketing stimuli (Lowe & Corkindale 1998). It is, therefore, important to conduct research studies across different cultures.

Yoghurt is an established product in China and appears to be rapidly increasing in popularity. Various foreign brands dominate the market and it is a product which more Chinese, particularly from the Western part of the country, could export to the PRC. In this paper we briefly describe a study which was designed to examine the influences of social drinkers on the yogurt consumption of Beijing women.

Method

The research was conducted in two stages:

Stage 1:

Seven focus group discussions were conducted. There were eight participants in each group. The aim for this phase of the research was to acquire in-depth knowledge of the social drinkers and other factors likely to influence the consumption of foods. The results of the focus groups were used to refine the measuring instruments for Stage 2.

Stage 2:

Metropolitan Beijing was divided into eight census districts. Women (372) were selected from these eight regions through a stratified random sampling technique. Respondents came from randomly selected streets and apartment blocks (or houses) in each of the regions in three age bands (18 to 29, 30 to 44 and over 44 years of age) with specific quotas within each age band. Men were also selected but as their yogurt consumption was influenced by a different combination of factors, their findings are being reported elsewhere, as will findings relating to other foods.

Findings from the focus groups were incorporated into a questionnaire which was translated into Chinese. To check the accuracy of the translation, an independent panel translated the new Chinese instrument back into English. The leaders of the interviewing teams piloted this new Chinese measuring instrument in Beijing, before the final version was produced.

Questionnaire

The interviewers administered the detailed questionnaire. It contained several sections:

Usual behaviour: Women were asked to indicate their usual frequency of yogurt consumption.

The frequency scale was: never, monthly, once or twice a month, once a week, and several times a week. For the purpose of the analysis, respondents were classified into three categories: non-consumers (never), occasional consumers (once or twice a month and less often) and frequent consumers (weekly or more often).

Lifestyle activities: A series of items (derived from the focus group discussions in Stage 1) was presented. Respondents indicated how frequently they did each of the activities (e.g. karaoke/ dancing, playing golf, dine out with friends) on five point scales (1 = Never to 5 = several times a week). Patterns of activities were derived from factor analyses of the item responses.

Possessions: A list of common (e.g. bicycles) and relatively novel consumer goods (eg computers) was presented. Respondents indicated possession of these goods on two point scales (yes or no). Again categories of ownership were derived from factor analysis.

Radio and TV program selection: Respondents were asked how often (1 = rarely to 5 = daily) they watched or listened to a variety of program types covering Chinese and Western TV and radio, classical music and films, news programs and documentaries.

Personal values: A 62 item inventory was developed based on various values (Lowe & Corkindale 1998). The items covered a variety of value types, eg materialism, respect for tradition, self assertion. Five point scales were used (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to express respondents beliefs in each proposition. Multidimensional scaling of these items derived eight scales. In the interests of brevity only those scales which discriminated between the three yogurt consumption groups will be described here. Further details are available directly from the authors.

Results

Stage 1

The focus group discussions showed that Chinese consumers discriminate between foreign and local brands of yoghurt. For example, nearly all the respondents indicated that yoghurt was nutritious and easy to drink. The focus groups also indicated that yoghurt had come to like yoghurt’s sour taste. One woman noted that some schools served it to children to overcome their initial dislike of the product. Some middle-aged women believed that eating yoghurt enhanced one’s beauty because of the gels involved. Some of them were concerned about the health benefits of the yoghurt which they had consumed it in summer because of possible deterioration.

Stage 2

Among the women respondents, 32% claimed to have never eaten yoghurt, while 26% are it only occasionally and 42% consumed it once a week or more often (Table 1). The high percentage of non-consumers of yoghurt were younger than non-consumers, more of whom were over 44 years of age (p<0.0001).

Further, a high proportion of university graduates (52%) consumed yoghurt when compared to non-tertiary educated women (38%; p<0.04). On the other hand, there were no significant differences in household income among the three consumption groups.

Table 3 provides brief descriptions of the factors that are useful discriminators between the three age groups. These discriminators are based on factor and multi-dimensional scaling analyses. Further details are available from the authors.

Table 4 shows the respondents’ mean scores on the scales presented in Table 3. It also shows the level of statistical significance associated with the differences between the three age groups. It appears that yoghurt consumers’ lifestyles were congruent with their relative youth. They engaged more social activity that these three age groups. However, they were going to karaoke and dances. They also owned more luxury goods, and listened more often to pop music programs.

The differences in personal values between the yogurt consumption groups were pronounced. Frequent and occasional consumers were more materialistic and had less respect for authority, family and traditional values.
Balfours and Pizza Haven deliver frozen pizza

Pizza Haven has joined with Australian baker, Balfours to take advantage of Australia’s lucrative frozen pizza market.

Pizza Haven is one of the fastest growing home delivery pizza brands in the country with a network which stretches throughout Australia and Balfours distributes into all states through all channels including grocery, food service and education. It has nearly 150 years experience in baking.

Balfours Sales and Marketing Director, Paul Stanley, explained, “We started trials six months ago, determined to not only provide a frozen offering, but to replicate the Pizza Haven home delivered pizza. These pizzas are the closest thing to the fresh experience that has ever been delivered.”

“Balfours provides the customer certainty that HACCP and ISO9002 quality approval. The Frozen Pizza market is worth $80 million in Australia and we’re looking to take a large slice of that. Year on year we’re expecting to achieve 10% market share growth”.

Pizza Haven Director, Evan Christou said the frozen pizza segment of the national food market was enjoying a healthy 6.5% annual growth but it has lacked innovation. He believes that this product launch will re-ignite the category.

Brothers Evan, Jim and Gabriel Christou started Pizza Haven in 1964 with the aid of a $24,000 mortgage over their parents house.

“Back then pizzas were a luxury which was home delivered. Today around 50% of our customers pick up their pizzas and, now, this partnership with Balfours makes a response to a further shift in consumer choice,” said Evan.

The six inch, single serve Pizza Haven Home Bake pizzas will be produced at Balfours’ South Australian bakery in four styles – Hawaiian, Meat Supreme, Barbecue Roast Chicken and Vegetarian’s Choice. They will be sold nationally through major supermarket chains in packaging which matches Pizza Haven’s existing takeaway box.

Paul Stanley, Balfours
Tel 0408 296 486

Milk gets the good fish oil

In an Australian first, a revolutionary new milk product Heart Plus, developed by Browns Dairy, Western Australia, contains the essential omega-3 fats from marine oil, which have been found to aid in the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Professor of Medicine at the University of Western Australia and member of the WA Heart Research Institute and WA Institute for Medical Research, Professor Lawrie Bellin and his team have conducted extensive research on omega-3 and its role in promoting a healthy heart and circulatory system.

Professor Bellin said, “Marine omega-3 is a vital component in the diet of many Australians, most commonly taken in the form of fish or fish oil capsules, however most Australians have a very low intake of omega-3 fats. Low fat dairy products with added omega-3 fatty acids should be a useful part of an overall healthy diet and lifestyle.”

The outcome of extensive research

Catherine Saxelby, a leading Australian

Nutritionist and Dietician said, “Research is revealing enormous benefits from an increased consumption of omega-3 fats. Just as vitamins are essential to good health, so are the essential fatty acids. The body is unable to produce omega-3 and relies on food to obtain them.”

Endorsed by the National Heart Foundation, Heart Plus is low in fat and contains vitamins B6, B12, folate and antioxidants E and K in addition to healthy marine omega-3 fats. One glass of Heart Plus provides 95% of the recommended daily intake of omega-3.

The question remains however, “what about the taste?” After years of extensive research the team of expert palate testers at Browns Dairy say they have found the perfect formula which ensures Heart Plus tastes just like normal milk.

Table 4. Comparisons of the mean factor scores of the three yoghurt consumption groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Respondents' mean scores</th>
<th>p*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>OCCAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop music</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal luxuries</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family luxuries</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family values</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Respondents' mean scores on the scales are expressed as mean ratings.

** Statistical significance P < 0.05
**p<0.01, **P<0.001.

Figure 1. Graph of the function derived from discriminant analysis

Note: 0.75 0.5 0.25 0.25

References


Table 3. Description of key factors which differentiated between the three yoghurt consumption groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Factors</th>
<th>CA*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more big</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is more to respect to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more even</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more to respect to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more even</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more to respect to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is more even</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* CA = Contribution to explanatory power.