"Social drivers" as predictors of yoghurt consumption in China

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Publication Details
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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

This journal article is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/1013
“Social drivers” as predictors of yoghurt consumption in China
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A survey of yoghurt consumption by female consumers in Beijing showed 42% consuming often, 26% occasionally and 52% never. Consumers were generally younger and more driven by materialistic values than non-consumers. “Social drivers” 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 (Bruson & Garrett 1996). It has been noted that consumers’ purchasing power in the People’s Republic of China is growing, and that consumers goods 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 began to decentralise the controlled economy 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 see the benefits of consumption 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 modernity has enabled them to export to their own personal spirit of culture and luxury opportunities enough to have their own personal bottles of spirits labelled in racks above the bars. However, these factors have not led to the consumption lifestyle characteristics of consumers in the PRC remain relatively unexamined.

While 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 beliefs are important indicators of consumer behavior. For social drivers (often referred to as social drivers) are important indicators of groups of consumers who are more likely than others to buy and consume particular products (Mitchell 1983, Holman 1984, Coren & others 1991).

However, the factors which influence the purchase of food products, particularly categories, are relatively unknown. Grunert & others (1993) described and tested a Food Lifestyle model in Denmark which proposes a number of influences on food purchases and consumption. Among them are consumers’ personal values and interest in shopping and cooking, as well as abstract and concrete perceptions of the products, such as characteristics, brand and marketing programs, and more tangible properties like price and quantity.

Even less is known about the influences of social drivers. A study of Asian women’s perceptions of cross-cultural study we designed and tested a values inventory which is used to measure Asian as well as Western consumers (Lowe & Corenkle 1998). This research indicated that the differences in attitudes and perceptions towards various marketing stimuli (e.g advertising, sales promotions, packaging) between Westerners and Chinese are relatively small in cultural value systems.

More important, 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 the judgments of some activities and perceptions towards a particular marketing stimuli amongst Western consumers, there may be a totally different set of values for Chinese consumers for the same marketing stimuli. In other words, other cannot assume that the same set of values will influence two different groups of consumers’ responses to the same marketing stimuli (Lowe & Corenkle 1998). It is, therefore, important to conduct research studies across different countries.

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 consumers are thinking about and could export to the PRC. In this paper we briefly describe a study which was designed to examine the influences of social drivers on the yoghurt 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 drivers 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 proportionate 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 yoghurt consumption was influenced by a different combination of factors the findings of the study cannot be extended 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 person 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 factors were asked to indicate their usual frequency of yoghurt consumption.

The frequency scale was: never, monthly, once or twice a month, once a week, and several times a week. For the purpose of this study, respondents were classified into three categories: non-consumers (never), occasional consumers (once or twice a month or less often) and frequent consumers (weekly or more often). Lifestyles: 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 (e.g. microwaves) 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 TV or listened to a variety of program types covering Chinese and Western pop and classical music and films, news programs and documentaries.

Personal values: A 62 item inventory was developed based on the Chinese values (Lowe & Corenkle 1998). The items covered a variety of values types, e.g. 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 yoghurt consumption groups will be described here. Further details are available directly from the authors.

Analysis: The data were checked, coded and entered into the computer. The frequency table analyses of the individual items by yoghurt consumption category were conducted. Subsequently, scales were derived from factor analysis and multidimensional scaling analyses (as described above) and respondents’ scores on these scales were compared between the three yoghurt consumption groups via discriminant analysis.

Results
Stage 1
The focus group discussions showed that Chinese consumers perceived foreign goods to be of higher quality than locally produced goods. Foreign brands of yoghurt were much more expensive than locally produced equivalents but more highly preferred.

Stage 2
Among the women respondents, 32% claimed to have never eaten yoghurt, while 26% ate it only occasionally and 42% consumed it once a week or more often (Table 1).

The highest percentage of 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 recent 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 groups.

Table 3 provides brief descriptions of the factors that are useful discriminators between the three age groups. These descriptions are based on factor and multidimensional 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 groups of women for each scale.

It appears that yoghurt consumers’ lifestyles were congruent with their relative youth. They engaged more in social activities such as going to karaoke and dances. They also owned more luxury goods, and listened more often to pop music programs.

The results of the differences in personal values between the yoghurt consumption groups are presented.

Frequent and occasional consumers were more materialistic and had less respect for authority, family and traditional values.

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Balfours and Pizza Haven deliver frozen pizza

Pizza Haven, an Australian pizza outlet, has teamed up with Balfours to offer a frozen pizza delivery service.

Pizza Haven is one of the fastest growing home delivery pizza brands in the country, which covers the whole of Australia and Balfours distributes in all states through all channels including grocery, food service and education. It has nearly 150 years of 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.”

“Balloons provides the customer certainty that HACCP and ISO9002 quality approval. The Frozen Pizza market is worth $800 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-invigorate the category.

Brothers Evan, Paul 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 Round 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: 0498 279 643

Milk gets the good fish oil

In an Australian first, a revolutionary new milk product Heart Plus, developed by Brownes 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.”

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 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 Brownes Dairy say they have found the perfect formula which ensures Heart Plus tastes just like normal milk.