

Solving the Communication Puzzle between Consumers and the Beef Industry:
Understanding Consumer Motivation when Purchasing Retail Beef

Poster Abstract

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Introduction

For decades the beef industry has been faced with the challenge of demand decline. The beef industry not being able to meet the consumer's need has made the challenge one that cannot be ignored. The lack of marketers being able to respond to the dynamic market place is shown by the decrease in consumption (Felderhoff, 2007). It is evident that beef producers need to better understand consumer needs and attitudes toward purchasing retail beef. Producers cannot ignore

the need for a sustainable marketing system to be implemented into the industry. The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the factors that influence consumers when purchasing retail beef. The following are objectives that were established to serve as the foundation for the study:

- 1) Identify the American beef consumer's reasons for consuming beef.
- 2) Determine the meat characteristics that consumers look for when making beef purchasing decisions.

Conceptual Framework

The reasoned action theory created by Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) suggests that an individual's behavior is influenced by their intention to execute the behavior. This intention is comprised of three aspects: their attitude toward the behavior, their subjective norms (their beliefs of how people they are close to view the behavior at task), and their perceived behavioral control (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). A researcher identified attitude toward the behavior of purchasing beef to include: the individual's time allotted for preparing a meal, their confidence in their ability to cook a piece of meat, and their own tastes and preferences of a particular protein source. The researcher recognized the following as subjective norms: would others believe the beef is safe to consume, offer a nutritious benefit, and would provide an enjoyable eating experience. Finally, the researcher noted that the perceived behavior control would be the consumer's ability to abstain from purchase if the price was not affordable.

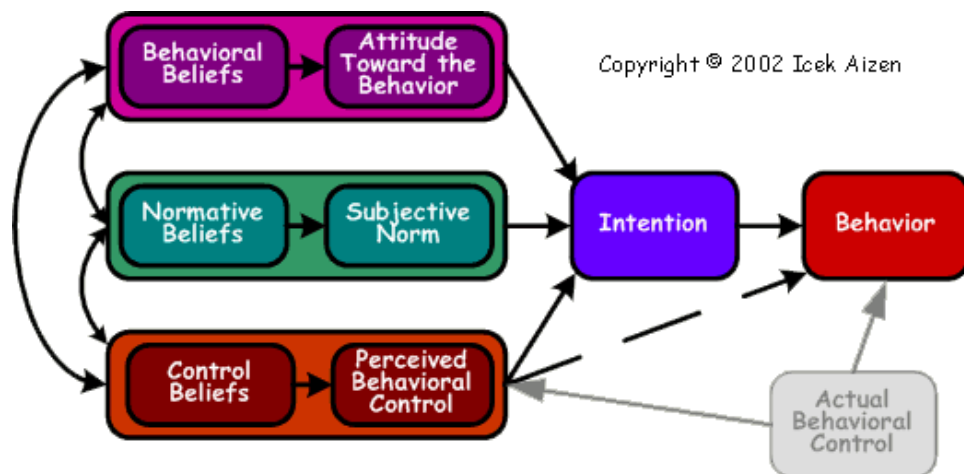


Figure 1: Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, p. 179-211.

Methodology

This study was a literature review to assemble the findings of previous consumer studies. These collaborated results will serve a foundational knowledge base for further consumer studies. The means of conducting the literature review consisted of searching key words through the Google Scholar Web site. A search for keywords such as consumer tastes and preferences, retail beef, and attitudes was completed and the results yielded 12 articles useful for the literature review.

Findings

Recent research has found several factors that influence consumer's decisions when purchasing retail beef. The consumer research trend for determining the factors that motivate consumers include tenderness, flavor, and juiciness of the cooked product (Reicks, 2007), price, region of origin (Mennecke et al., 2007), nutritional value, and ease of preparation. With the research

found, the researcher believes there is a factor being over looked, that could better indentify the need of the consumer, and this factor could include: gender, income, or other demographics.

Conclusions

From the information and knowledge gained from the completion of this study, there is no denying the fact that more consumer research needs to be done. The consumer is vastly changing and unpredictable. The knowledge gained each time research is performed on consumers, the closer research is to indentifying the need of the consumer.

Recommendations

It is suggested that there needs to more studies done in order to obtain more accurate data. Researchers should construct another nationwide survey to distribute to beef consumers. I purpose a study should be done that divides the nation into three regions: West, Central, and East. A convenience population should be taken from multiple major cities in each of these regions. This will allow for a broader population, instead of one that comes from a concentrated area of the United States. While this will continue to be a convenience sample, it will broaden the area from which the population is sampled creating the opportunity for more diversity among participants. Any information that can be obtained about the consumer will help marketers understand beef consumer's motivation for purchasing beef.

References

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