

JUDGING OF DAIRY PRODUCTS



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Module 11. Consumer acceptance studies

Lesson 30

OBJECTIVES, METHODS, TYPES OF QUESTIONNAIRES, DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRES

30.1 Introduction

Consumers acceptance and preference study is an important tool to decide the acceptability of the any dairy/food products by large group of the people. To conduct a successful consumer survey one must know the important factors which may influence once survey results and conclusions. These factors are categorized in two groups:

1. Consumer related factors and
2. Product related factors

Consumer related factors areas under.

1. Availability
2. Utility
3. Convenience
4. Price
5. Uniformity and dependability
6. Stability, storage requirements
7. Safety and nutritional value
8. Sensory properties
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Aroma and taste

- c. Texture, consistency
- d. Temperature
- c. Pain

Products Related factors are as follows..

1. Regional preferences
2. Nationality, race
3. Age and Sex
4. Religion
5. Education, Socio-economics
6. Psychological motivation
 - a. Symbolism of food
 - b. Advertising
7. Physiological motivation
 - a. Thrust
 - b. Hunger
 - c. Deficiencies
 - d. Pathological conditions

It becomes very difficult to ascertain the role of sensory attributes of the product in getting any food selected by consumers. These all complete factors interact and influence the consumer's decisions. The objective of the study should not only be sensory evaluation but there should be a total approach to know why consumer has accepted or rejected the product. A good product packed nicely may not be accepted by consumer because of its high price tag.

It is obvious that the sample with lowest cost with relatively good sensory attributes will be selected and excellent samples with high prices will not found in their selection lists. The excellent samples with a very high price are likely to be rejected for a given target population. Price is an important limitation of the freedom, which the consumer selects.

30.2 Regional Preference

Some regional food preferences exist for specific dairy products such as ghee (variation in flavour preference curdy in the west and cooked in the south) and shrikhand (liked in western region). The sample survey for sensory attributes may differ from one regions to another region due to their age old perceptions and preference. However due to organized country wide production of dairy products like ghee and free movement of products, the regional preferences seem to be decreasing to some extent.

30.3 Age and Sex

The age of the consumer has been reported to influence preferences for some food products. According to one of the study, filled yoghurt (with milk fat as control) prepared with maize, sunflower groundnut or olive oil was given to three age groups (<20, 20 -30 and > 30 years). All the 3 groups related control yoghurt highest and sunflower yoghurt lowest, but only the 20 – 30 year age group detected any appreciable difference between the other 3 types of yoghurt.

Difference in personality, sensory acuity and likes and dislikes are usually more pronounced between people of the same sex than between the two sexes as groups. There are, however, group differences between the sexes which can be effectively used in planning and conducting market survey campaigns.

30.4 Other Factors

Interest, motivation, discrimination, intelligence, and many other attributes of consumers undoubtedly influence responses to food. Individual variation in sensory acuity influences responses at consumer level as well as in the laboratory. The inter relationship of physiological nutritional and psychological factors must be taken into account for conducting extensive surveys of factory and taste abilities of the potential consumers.

30.5 Methodology

The target of conducting particular consumer market survey governs the selection of methodology, population, age group and sex, and type of questionnaire to be used. This objective has its typical attributes and problems which are to be taken into consideration before conducting the actual survey. The objective of a survey may be:

- i. Introduction of new products.
- ii. Quality assessment and control of existing products.
- iii. Determination of market potential.
- iv. Establishment of specific factors of importance to the consumers.
- v. Effect of group feeding.

vi. Impact of advertising campaigns and educational programmes.

vii. Testing of methods and statistical producers.

30.6 Different Approaches

There are following different approaches to collect the response of consumer.

- i. Historical, based on past records of sales and turnover,
- ii. Observational based on data collected by trained person (s) on the behavior of consumers in the market and
- iii. Through well worked and targeted questionnaire response.

30.6.1. Historical method

To understand the present market and estimate future market events the investigator must consult statistics of food distribution, sales records, and product turnover rates. These records are analyzed and extrapolated to know future trends. Unknown reasons for drop in sales has to be predicated through observational and questionnaire response method in a market situation. Statistical records of the market provide information (to the investigator) about the area, region and population be considered for conducting consumer preference studies.

30.6.2 Observational method

The method requires trained person(s) to observe group behavior of consumers and can gather quantitative and qualitative data on food habits and ways of selection. Hidden observers can watch consumers in super markets to determine whether purchases are planned or impulsive to establish what displays and packaging appeals to them to determine whether certain food items are selected more often by men than by women.

Merchandisers may be interested in knowing the role of background music, product location, lighting or other physical or psychological factors responsible for consumer behavior.

Advertisers and producers are interested in how the consumer appraises the product – does he/she smell it, squeeze it, weigh it, read the label, study instruction, or compare it with other on the shelf.

Expert observers may take help of video-cameras for close observation and hidden microphones to enhance their efficiency. The value of observation method can be enhanced if same consumers are interviewed through questionnaire to find out the difference between 'activity' and 'response'

30.6.3 Questionnaires

To obtain consumer reaction on a multitude of topics related to selection and use of commodities, carefully worded questionnaires are frequently used. The questionnaires may vary from one short question to several hundred enquiries about past, present and future behavior.

The effectiveness of this method depends on:

- i. The questionnaire, and
- ii. The degree of co-operative spirit elicited from the consumer as well as, the type of approach employed.

The method may be:

- i. In – depth interview
- ii. Word association
- iii. Sentence completion
- iv. Projective questioning
- v. Role playing
- vi. Recorded group discussion and
- vii. Pre-test questionnaire.

The most common approaches with the questionnaire method include telephone, mail, personal interview, and public test which have advantages and disadvantages. However, personal interview is most reliable way of obtaining information on food. Preferences and it has an advantage of collecting consumers observational data concomitantly. The consumer may be approached in interview after serving the sample to obtain their opinions. At the same time they are also observed for their behavior in buying the product to establish a correlation of degree of liking with buying behaviour.

30.6.4 Types of questionnaires

i. Opinion questionnaire

When opinions of consumers are sought, the following are the type questions True – false response

- i. Yes – no response
- ii. One – word answer

iii. Multiple choice

iv. Essay type

- a. Why do you _____?
- b. What do you think of _____?
- c. What would you do if _____?

ii. Selection of questionnaire

The selection of a questionnaire used to judge select experimental food depends on:

- i. The number of treatments,
- ii. Sensory intensity of the food commodity, and
- iii. The information desired.

Following is a list of examples of presentation method suitable for consumer survey purpose :-

I. Single – Sample presentation

- a. Acceptable or unacceptable
- b. Degree of liking
- c. Description (with or without suggested terminology)
- d. Numerical scoring.

II. Paired – sample presentation

Identified– product paired comparison in which sample of known quality is compared against sample of unestablished quality.

- a. General preference
- b. Degree of preference
- c. Difference testing
- d. Quality scoring or scaling devices
- e. Blind paired comparison, in which the quality of neither sample has been established previously.

III. Three sample presentation

- a. Triangle test
- b. Ranking
- c. Quality scoring or numerical scaling
- d. Descriptive terms
- e. Due– trio

IV. More than three samples.

- a. Ranking
- b. Scoring or scaling
- c. Degree of liking

30.6.5 Limitations of consumers survey

The limitations of consumers surveys are:

- i. Expensive,
- ii. Time consuming the subject to numerous uncontrollable variables.

Although most survey yield valuable information, investigators experience many problems and should recognize the limitation of their methods.

The response of consumers, as individuals, or as a group, can easily be under estimated or over estimated.

The following consumers characteristics are encountered in many surveys:-

- Inability to remembers, to generalize, or to identify motives.
- Inability to describe likes, dislikes and attitudes.
- Inability to weigh the numerous alternatives.
- Unawareness of what influenced their behavior.
- Awareness of more factors than the impact of influence warrants.
- Desire to please the interrogator.

- Desire for social status, prestige, and keeping up with the Joneses.

However, by correct wording of questionnaire most of the above traits can be avoided or diminished. Collaborative studies between food technologists, economists, psychologist and statisticians must be conducted for making consumer behavior more predictable

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