Consumer & Market Insights Research Programme

Consumer-led New Product Development

For information on the Food Marketing Research Unit’s (FMRU) Consumer & Market Insights Research Programme, please contact:

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Project Title: Developing Novel Convenient Meat Based Products by Application of High Pressure Processing (HPMeats)

Duration: 2006-2009

Funding: Food Institutional Research Measure

Partners: Joe Kerry (UCC)

Project Description:
Consumers are increasingly demanding high quality, convenient meat-based foods that are nutritious and minimally processed. To meet consumer demand without compromising food safety, it is necessary to assess the feasibility of new preservation technologies. However, commercialising products utilising new technologies presents considerable challenges to firms in terms of developing innovative products on one hand, and the marketing of science to consumers on the other. The overall objective of this multi-disciplinary research project is to develop chilled ready meals of high nutritional and sensory quality, with enhanced convenience and shelf-life, through the application high pressure processing (HPP). The main objectives of the consumer insight element of this project are: to determine consumers’ and stakeholders’ attitudes towards chilled HPP ready meals; and to assess HPP as a viable technology in the manufacture of chilled ready meals in terms of technical and commercial feasibility, and consumer acceptance.

Qualitative research will initially investigate consumers’ and stakeholders’ attitudes towards the application of HPP to chilled ready meals, through a combination of 40 consumer interviews and 25 stakeholder interviews. This research will help identify the main barriers to the adoption of HPP, from both a consumer and industry perspective. The in-depth consumer interviews will also employ the Laddering technique, which is based on means-end theory, and will identify the most consumer-relevant positioning strategies for effective communication of the benefits associated with HPP. Following this, acceptance testing of prototype chilled HPP ready meals, from both a marketing and sensory perspective, will be conducted with 500 purchasers of chilled ready meals. This integrated marketing and sensory approach to NPD will make it possible to model consumers’ sensory preferences for ready meals. It is envisaged that the research will identify the optimal processing and cost parameters that deliver chilled HPP ready meals with high levels of consumer satisfaction, with potential applications for other high added-value consumer foods.

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**Project Title:** An Analysis of New Product Development Opportunities for Irish Companies in the British Cheese Market

**Duration:** 2004-2006

**Funding:** Teagasc Walsh Fellowship Programme

**Partners:** Mary McCarthy (UCC)

**Project Description:**
New product development (NPD) is a knowledge intensive process where the generation of new ideas and concepts requires detailed knowledge of both products and consumers. Consumers have an extremely important role to play at the early stages of the NPD process, as a resource and as co-designers, since they can make an effective contribution to product design and acceptability. The incorporation of consumer insights at the pre-development stages of the NPD process make organisations better able to adapt to changes in consumers’ needs, and can ultimately lead to higher quality and consumer satisfaction. This research investigated consumer-driven NPD opportunities for new cheese products in the UK. The main objectives of this study were: to identify the factors that influence consumers when purchasing cheese; and to identify NPD opportunities based on existing requirements and consumers’ unmet needs from the cheese category.

A sequential exploratory research design strategy was chosen for this study. Specific consumer groups, namely ‘innovators’ and ‘early adaptors’, which were deemed receptive towards new products were recruited for the study. These consumers were selected on the basis of a positive response to the Domain Specific Innovativeness (DSI) attitudinal instrument. Initially, 8 in-depth consumer interviews were conducted, which provided rich insights, from both a product and category perspective, into consumers’ choice motives and preferences for cheese. Eight focus groups were then conducted to identify, screen and develop more tangible new cheese concepts. Twelve new cheese concepts arose from the focus group discussions. This was reduced to six concepts following consultations with industry, which took both market demand and technical feasibility issues into consideration. A final round of 7 focus groups refined the new product concepts, which represented potential NPD opportunities for Irish cheese exporters to the UK. This research provides a framework by which manufacturers can adopt a ‘fast-track’ approach to concept ideation and development, when bringing consumer-led new products to the marketplace.

**Final Report:** The end of project report (Project Armis No. 5224) can be downloaded here

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Project Title: Second Generation GM Foods: Perspectives on Likely Future Acceptance by Irish Consumers

Duration: 2002-2004

Funding: Teagasc Walsh Fellowship Programme

Partners: John O’ Connell (UCD), Gwilym Williams (DIT)

Project Description:
Strategic reviews of the Irish food industry have consistently emphasised the need for food and beverage firms to improve their innovation and marketing capabilities, in order to maintain and enhance competitiveness in both domestic and overseas markets. However, while new products offer potentially greater rewards to manufacturers in terms of adding value and potentially higher premiums, the level of risk in terms of new product failure also increases. This is particularly true when acceptance issues are either ignored or poorly understood by companies. This research investigated consumers’ perceptions and acceptance of ‘radically innovative’ new products, using second generation GM products that deliver specific benefits to consumers as an example. The main objectives of this study were: to identify the optimal product design attributes for second generation GM yoghurts and dairy table spreads; and to identify and profile specific consumer segments with high levels of acceptance for consumer-led second generation GM products.

Qualitative research initially investigated both consumers and stakeholders’ perceptions of hypothetical second generation GM yoghurts and dairy table spreads through a combination of 5 consumer focus groups and 6 in-depth stakeholder interviews. Importantly, the qualitative discussions helped to reduce and refine the range of new product ideas to a manageable number of viable new product concepts for further evaluation. Following this, a conjoint-based questionnaire was administered to 297 purchasers of yoghurts and dairy table spreads in order to model their purchase preferences for hypothetical second generation GM yoghurts and dairy table spreads. The consumer-oriented approach to NPD presented in this research helped identify commercially feasible second generation GM products with relatively high levels of consumer acceptance, targeted at specific market segments. This study illustrated how an understanding of consumers’ perceptions, choice motives and value systems could provide guidance to marketers in terms of marketing strategies, and to R&D personnel in terms of concept development and product design, when bringing ‘radically innovative’ foods and beverages to the marketplace.

Final Report: The end of project report (Project Armis No. 5042) can be downloaded here

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