

Important information for the selection of workplace canteen meals: A consumer segmentation study

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INTRODUCTION

The provision of nutritional information has been associated with improved intakes and dietary profiles^(1,2), but in a workplace canteen, consumers typically have very little information on the foods they are eating⁽³⁾. Any provided information is also more likely to be used and valued, if consumers consider it to be relevant to them^(2,3).

This study aimed to characterize consumers based on the information of importance to them when selecting a meal from a workplace/ university canteen.

METHOD

An online questionnaire was created based on the outcomes of focus groups⁽⁴⁾, that identified eight factors of potential importance to meal selection in a workplace canteen on which information could be provided.

These factors were 'value for money', 'naturalness', 'nutrition', 'origin', 'animal welfare', 'environmental impact', 'fair trade' and 'organic'.

452 individuals with access to a workplace/university canteen, from Denmark (DK), France (FR), Greece (GR) and the UK, completed the questionnaire.

Individuals were asked to choose the information of importance to them in meal selection in a canteen, using a best-worst scaling method;

Important factors were identified per individual (as best-worst utility scores) and these data were analysed by latent class cluster analysis.

RESULTS

In general, and across countries, information on 'value for money', 'nutrition' and 'naturalness' was most important to consumers. Latent class cluster analysis was performed and a five cluster solution chosen as best fit (BIC=16900.8, error=0.11) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Outcomes of the latent class analysis

Cluster name	%	Cluster description	Gender (%male/ female)	Age (% <30/ 30-40/ 40+)	Country (% UK, DK, FR, GR)	Employment (% full/ part time)
Value driven	33	high importance given to 'value for money', and to some extent to 'nutrition' and 'naturalness', but low importance given to environmental concerns	46/54	66/23/11	39/34/17/10	56/44
Conventionalist	23.2	high importance given to 'value for money' and 'nutrition', and some consideration also given to more socially conscious factors	46/54	65/19/18	48/17/21/14	64/36
Socially responsible	19.2	high importance given to the factors involved in food production 'environmental impact', 'fair trade', 'organic' and 'animal welfare', low importance given to 'value for money' 'nutrition' and 'naturalness'	30/70	41/20/39	31/9/30/30	60/40
Health conscious	14.2	high importance given to 'naturalness', 'organic' and 'nutrition', low importance given to 'value for money' and to more environmental and socially conscious factors	28/72	45/23/29	19/14/36/31	78/22
locavores	10.4	high importance given to 'provenance', and to some extent to 'environmental impact' and 'naturalness', low importance to 'nutrition'	32/68	38/19/43	11/30/8/51	45/55

DISCUSSION

These findings suggest different information to be more/less important to different consumers when selecting a workplace canteen meal. Provision of only the information important to an individual may result in increased use and value of that information, as previously demonstrated^(2,3).

EU-funded project FoodSMART aims to develop an interactive mobile phone application to provide this personally important information.

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