

Investigating the middle income consumer's perception towards beef and sheep meat

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Research focus area: Consumerism, Market development and Trade

Full Title of the project

A survey to investigate the SA consumer's perception towards red meat (beef and sheep meat) - focusing on LSM 5-8

Aims of the project

- To determine the current meat purchasing and consumption behavior of the middle LSM consumer
- To determine the behavioural motivations and perceptions towards red meat in middle LSM consumer
- To determine the current and most trusted information sources on red meat for the middle LSM consumer

Executive summary

The overall project objective was to investigate the dynamic South African red meat consumers from the South African middle class (LSM 5-8) residing in the Gauteng province of South Africa, with a specific focus on meat purchasing and consumption behaviour; behavioural motivations and perceptions; and consumers' current and most trusted information sources on red meat.

Primary data was gathered by means of a consumer survey based on a comprehensive questionnaire. The research targeted a stratified representative sample of LSM 5 to 8 consumers in Gauteng (n=171) (accounting for LSM groups, ethnicity and age) during March and April 2012. Professional panel recruitment identified suitable respondents and trained facilitators were used to complete the survey questionnaires (90 to 120 minutes per respondent). Data was captured, cleaned and then statistically analysed with SPSS to develop descriptive statistics, comparisons of frequencies and averages, as well as other analyses such as cluster analysis.

Comparing the survey results across LSM groups 5 to 8 it was clear that very few statistically significant differences were found between these four middle LSM groups, implying consistency in behavior and perceptions.

Even though a significant 97% of the sample consumed beef and 74% mutton/lamb (compared to almost 100% for chicken) it was interesting to observe that 86% of the sample indicated that it is important to consume animal protein food daily, while only 39% of the sample felt that it is important to consumer red meat 3 to 4 times per week.

Considering respondents' consumption frequencies for various animal protein food types, eggs and chicken had an average consumption frequency around three times per week and were consumed in the largest quantities. Fish and the more affordable beef cuts (e.g. stewing beef, boerewors and mince) were consumed on average around once per week. Affordability and health perceptions had a very strong influence on consumers' choices and behavior regarding animal protein foods.

There was definite movement towards more chicken meat at the expense of beef and mutton/lamb, with 79% and 70% of the sample consuming less mutton/lamb and beef over time being replaced with higher chicken consumption.

Positive red meat perceptions involved versatility, preparation knowledge, ease of preparation, good for braai and entertaining, tasty, tender and nutritious. Dominant negative perceptions focused on affordability, fat content (fatty meat) and health concerns.

The most popular beef cooking methods were stew, frying, braai, oven roast and grilling. For mutton/lamb the most popular cooking methods were stew, frying, grilling, braai and oven roasting.

The dominant red meat decision factors of the middle LSM sample focused mainly on food safety / hygiene, affordability and sensory appeal. It is critical to ensure that the red meat product offering on South African retail shelves address these basic aspects as minimum requirements followed by more advanced product quality attributes.

Respondents' most popular red meat information sources were TV, family, friends, doctors and magazines, while the most trusted red meat information sources were family, doctors, dieticians, friends and TV. There was a relatively high level of trust that exist for most sources however they are not actually used, with the exception of newspapers, television and general advertising. This could be partly attributed to factors such as budget constraints and a lack of access to information resources.

A significant 98% of the sample bought take-away food, with chicken dominating their take-away food choices (74% of sample). Restaurant meals were purchased by 44% of the sample associated with consuming beef (13%), ribs (11%) and chicken (7%).

Recommendations for future research focused on the geographical expansion of the consumer research, more comprehensive data mining towards strategic marketing recommendations, the implementation of repeated surveys over time and further research into consumers' views on sustainability issues.

Conferences

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Scientific article

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