

Preferences of German Pork Consumers – A Conjoint Analysis

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Background

In a cooperation with the Federation of Danish Pig Producers and Slaughterhouses and the Danish Crown slaughterhouse group the Danish Meat Research Institute is carrying out a project aimed at developing pigmeat for export to Germany as table meat. In order to achieve a product which can satisfy the German consumers' requirements in the best possible manner, we have carried out a Conjoint analysis evaluating the most important characteristics in table meat for the German market. Conjoint is a dynamic analysis method describing the consumers' needs and preferences at the point of purchase. Conjoint can be used for price determination, product knowledge and segmentation. Data are collected by using a pc-based programme. The programme is interactive, which means that the programme designs the questionnaire during the interview, based on the respondent's replies.

During the first stage of the programme, demographic data and possibly other information about the respondent are collected. During the second stage, the characteristics' relative importance is evaluated. The respondent must choose between two products, defined by the characteristics. After each decision, the respondent is presented with two new products. The programme continues questioning, until a pre-defined consistency in responses has been achieved.

A Conjoint analysis is based on the following criteria:

- The product can be defined by a set of characteristics which describe the product
- The characteristics are independent of one another
- The selected characteristics control the consumer's purchase action
- The price is always a characteristic
- The consumer acts in accordance with the response

Objective

The objective of the Conjoint analysis was to determine the relative importance of characteristics of table pork for the German market.

Methods

The important characteristics were identified in a focus group. Based on the focus group, market analyses and product knowledge, a Conjoint questionnaire was developed and tested on 26 consumers in Hannover. The analysis was carried out with 501 respondents in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Dortmund in May 1995. The product was pork chops, as this product was considered representative for the characteristics of the pork which are significant for the consumer.

In this Conjoint-analysis 9 characteristics were examined, each at several levels: Price, degree of marbling, amount of visible fat, country of origin, presence or absence of bones, claims with regard to taste, claims with regard to ethics, size and colour. Demographic variables and other variables were included e.g.: Importance of a producer brand and frequency of pork consumption in the family.

Results and Discussion

The analysis provides answers about the relative importance of the characteristics. Country of origin and quality labelling are most important. Price is mentioned as the third most important characteristic when buying pork chops. The physical characteristics of the meat have the least relative importance, e.g.: Size, colour, marbling and visible fat.

Country of origin is very important for the German consumer when buying pork chops. The results show, as expected, that the German consumer prefers German meat (figure 1). However, the result also shows that Danish pork was clearly preferred among imported meats. German consumers consider the value of Danish pork twice as high as Belgian pork and almost three times as high as Dutch pork.

German consumers do not want a lot of visible fat on pork chops. The less fat, the better. A medium fat cover, however, means only a minor loss of perceived value. The attitude towards marbling in the meat is similar (figure 2). A large level of intramuscular fat is not desirable while low or medium marbling provide a high perceived value to the consumer.

Conclusions

German consumers emphasise quality labelling and country of origin. They prefer meat from Germany, but choose Danish pork first among imported meats.

At the point of purchase the German consumer wishes a low fat content in the meat and only little visible fat. The evaluation is that this expresses the demand for a healthy and nutritious diet. The Conjoint analysis is considered a reliable way of evaluating significance of the individual characteristics for the consumers at the point of purchase.

References

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Figure 1

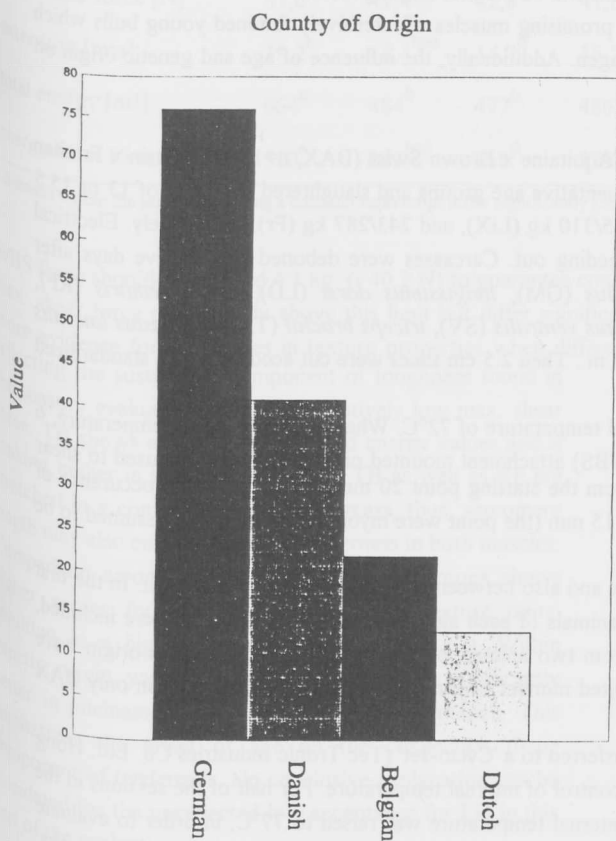


Figure 2

