

CONSUMERS IMAGES AND BELIEVES ABOUT BEEF AND LAMB'S BRAIN

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Food make a lot of fantasy because once consumed, it becomes an integrate part of our body. It feeds at the same time our body and our imagination. A food must be good to eat and good to think (Levi-Strauss, 1964).

Alimentary symbolism is present in a lot of food and, in beef, it seems to be particularly important. Indeed, even though wine suggests the masculine power, beef contain increasingly a message of energy and manliness : it possess symbolically the power of an hunter, the warrior power (Heraud, 1983). So, we understand that, there is a contamination between the eater and his food. We are what we eat (Rozin, 1994). A person acquires the food qualities of what he ingest : physics, behavioural or moral properties.

In traditional society, warriors avoid to eat hare because they are afraid to become coward or pregnant avoid to eat pork because they are afraid to have ugly baby.

These believes seem to be out-of-date but at the same, nowadays, they are present in our mind (eat some soup you grow up or don't drink coca cola it eating away).

Imaginary and symbolic concept seems to be very important in alimentary. What happen for beef or lamb's brain ? What images or believes they suggest ?

By using a specific method, we try to answer to these questions. The purpose of this study was to compile a large number of ideas about these food and observe if there is a consensus between French consumers.

MATERIEL AND METHODS

For answer to these questions, we created a questionnaire (Manoury et al, 1996) which contain 32 closed and half-opened questions. These questions interrogate consumers about three themes:

1. consumption
2. health, nutrition
3. believes or food images

101 possibilities of responses was offer to consumers (presented in table 1). Consumers can mark their responses with a cross when they are agree. **226 consumers** were interrogated in all the France. This study was realised by mail.

Beef and lamb's brain were presented in photography, consumers don't eat these products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 show the responses given by all consumers for the beef and lamb's brain photographies. Responses were classified in three themes according to the frequency of responses for every answer.

Questionnaire show that a lot of answers make a consensus between consumers. There is a consensus when 70 % of consumers answer identically to the same question (frequency of 158).

We can remark that for the lamb's brain, the number of no answer is particularly important. Indeed, we can observe for example, that lamb's brain contains most of negatives aspects : it's depreciated, it's not prescribed. It's different for the beef which is appreciated, natural, permit, prescribed...

Moreover, we can note differents perceptions between this two foods for the health theme. Indeed, beef is good for health, energy, useful, fortify but the lamb's brain, for example, has no effect on health. Consumers perceived beef more a positive food than lamb's brain.



For these consumers, beef seems to be benefit for human and lamb's brain is depreciated. This result can perhaps explain the soft consumption of lamb's brain in France.

CONCLUSION

Consensus between consumers can be established for these two foods in spite of differences which are inevitable. These results are very important for the comprehension and the explanation of consumption or no consumption of a product. When consumers spontaneously express their ideas about lamb's brain or beef, lamb's brain is good for memory but it is polluted and less healthy than formerly. Beef is nourishing, rich in protein and make powerful...

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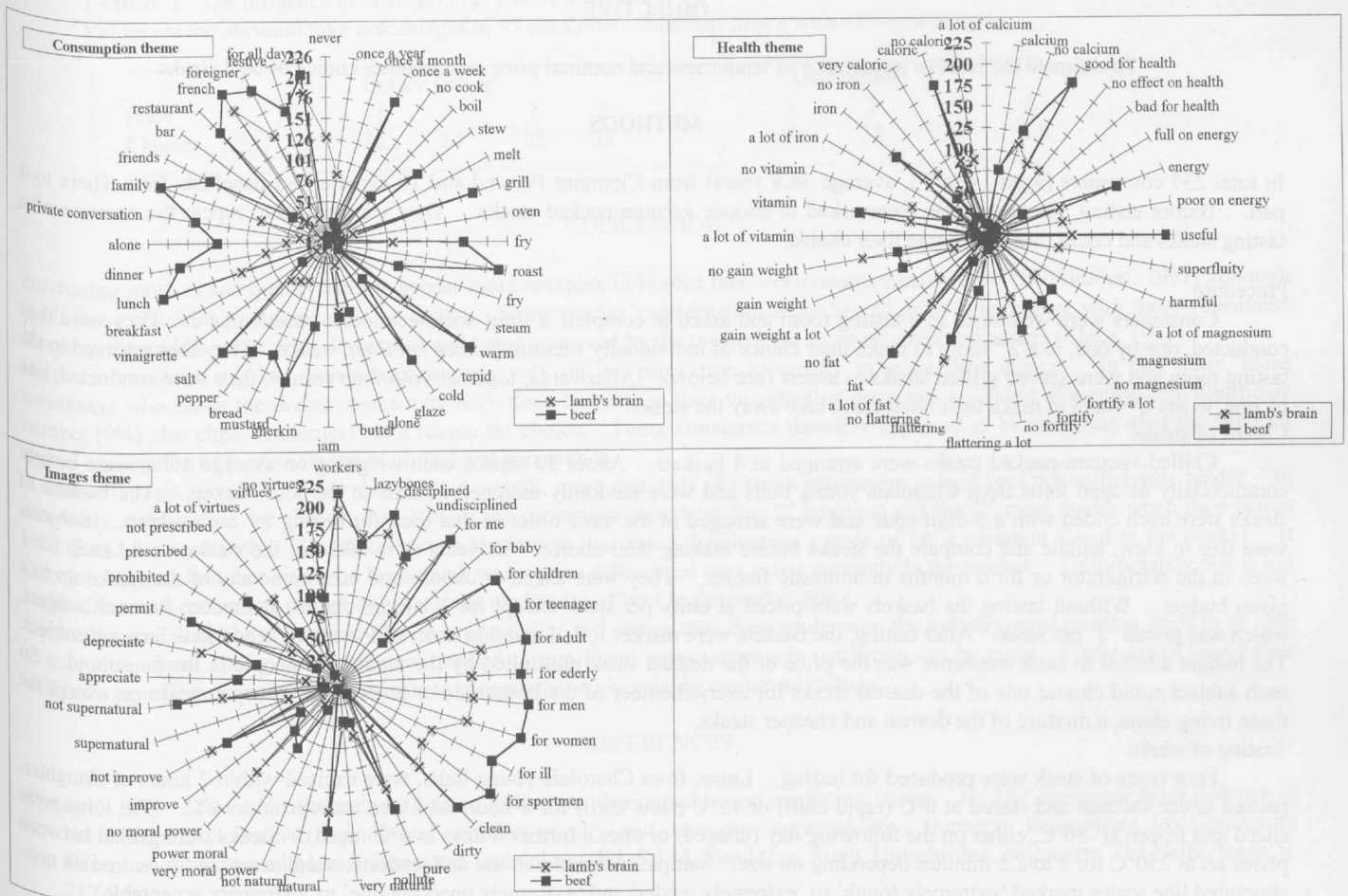


Table 1 : Consumer answers (frequency)