

UNDERSTANDING BRAZILIAN CONSUMER'S AWARENESS OF DRY-AGED BEEF

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I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior towards meat products is constantly evolving, necessitating targeted studies to understand their intentions, habits, and attitudes [1]. Within the realm of gourmet meat products, dry-aged beef stands out as a notable focus. Therefore, assessing consumer understanding of dry-aged beef becomes crucial for expanding the market for this particular product. Completion testing, a qualitative methodology utilized in research studies, provides valuable insights into consumer perceptions and preferences regarding a specific product [2]. Hence, this study aimed to assess Brazilian consumers' perceptions of dry-aged beef and pinpoint positive and negative factors influencing their decision-making process in acquiring this product through completion testing.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data were collected via an online questionnaire designed in Portuguese using QualtricsXM software® and distributed through social media using snowball sampling. The study targeted meat consumers aged 18 and above to investigate their behavior regarding dry-aged beef. Ethical approval was obtained, and all participants provided consent. A total of 126 consumers completed the questionnaire, meeting the study's criteria. The questionnaire comprised 16 structured questions related to the consumption of dry-aged beef, with respondents indicating whether they had previously consumed it or not. Those who had consumed dry-aged beef were asked for further details regarding consumption location and frequency. For the completion test, participants were asked to complete two incomplete dialogues simulating a purchase intention [3]. The dialogues were to be completed with a positive association (eg. Yes, we should, because ...), explaining why they would purchase the product, and a negative association (eg. No, we should not, because ...), explaining why they would not purchase the product. For data analysis, responses were divided into two categories based on the frequency of dry-aged beef consumption: respondents who had consumed the product (RC) and those who had never consumed it (RNC). The data underwent statistical analysis using the chi-square (χ^2) test, with a significance level set at 95% ($P < 0.05$). Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS 24 software package (SPSS, Chicago, IL).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the completion test, 15 categories of terms were established to encompass the factors that influence the decision to purchase or not dry-aged beef (10 categories that encourage product purchase: "Curiosity", "Distinctive flavor", "Desire to try", "Special occasion", "Tenderness", "Low cost", "Simple preparation", "Healthy", "Trend" and "Good appearance", and 5 categories that restrict purchase: "High cost", "Poor appearance", "Unfamiliarity", "Apprehension" and "Strong flavor". The most mentioned categories by the RC and RNC groups included "Curiosity" (36.2%), "Distinctive flavor" (23.5%), "Desire to try" (14.7%), and "Special occasion" (13.1%). On the other hand, "High cost" (47.3%) and "Poor appearance" (39.5%) were the most cited factors in response to a negative

purchase intention, followed by "Unfamiliarity" (8.4%), "Apprehension" (3.0%), and "Strong flavor" (1.8%). These findings highlight the significance of high cost and visual perception in influencing consumers' decision-making regarding the purchase of dry-aged beef. The results of term category frequencies in the RC and RNC groups regarding positive purchase intention showed that only "Distinctive flavor" had no significant differences between groups ($P > 0.05$) (Figure 1). The term "Curiosity" was more mentioned by RNC (69%) than RC (31%), while all other categories were more frequent in the RC group, especially "Desire" (76%), "Special occasion" (84%), and "Tenderness" (94%). Additionally, category terms like "Simple preparation," "Low cost," "Healthy," "Trend," and "Good appearance" were exclusively mentioned by the RNC group. These findings suggest different priorities between the groups concerning dry-aged beef purchase, with the RC emphasizing sensory experiences and special occasions. Moreover, non-consumers (RNC) showed greater interest in exploring new experiences, particularly associated with "Curiosity." Regarding negative purchase intention, the RC group predominantly expressed concerns about "High cost" (66%), while the RNC group showed more concern about "Unfamiliarity" (80%) and "Poor appearance" (75%) (Figure 1). These results underscore the importance of perceived cost, familiarity, and appearance in the decision to purchase dry-aged beef.

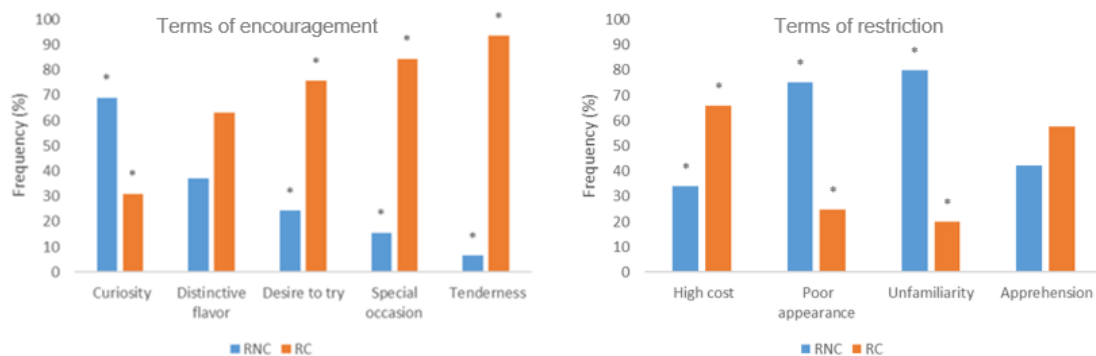


Figure 1. Frequency of term categories related to factors encouraging and restricting the purchase of dry-aged beef by consumers (RC) and non-consumers (RNC) in the completion test.

IV. CONCLUSION

Consumers in the RC group showed a more positive perception of the sensory attributes and emphasized the association of consuming this product with special occasions. This association was highlighted when considering the high cost of the product as a reason not to purchase it. On the other hand, the RNC group revealed a perspective of curiosity and unfamiliarity, expressing interest in exploring new experiences and flavors, as indicated by the terms "curiosity" and "never tried it". Thus, social influence might be a relevant factor in the decision to try new products. This points to an opportunity to educate and inform potential consumers about the attributes and benefits of this product.

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