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ABSTRACT CMD-02

Measuring Consumer Resistance to Innovation in Meat Packaging - Evidence from Choice Experiments

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This study applies real choice experiments to estimate how new food technologies affect consumer perceptions and evaluation of quality and safety product attributes. Consumers' acceptance and willingness-to-pay (WTP) for a new meat packaging technology, vacuum packaging, is investigated. Vacuum packaged beef was introduced in the Western Canadian retail market in 2010. The analysis focuses estimating consumer's resistance to technological innovation under different information scenarios. We conducted real choice experiments involving 108 participants recruited from the general public in the Edmonton metropolitan area. Participants were asked to make repeated choices between pairs of beef steak products differentiated by packaging technology. The experimental design included four attributes: price, packaging method (vacuum, tray), meat ageing, and shelf-life and three information treatments focused on the properties of vacuum packaging of meat. During the experiment participant's meat consumption preferences, knowledge of vacuum packaging, and acceptance of food technologies were assessed using a survey tool that follows Cox and Evans' (2008) FTNS.

The results show that people are suspicious of and concerned about a very long shelf-life and there is no significant evidence showing that people were willing to pay more for beef steak that has been aged longer. However, people who thought ageing of beef and shelf-life were important when purchasing beef steak were less likely to choose beef steak aged with shorter ageing and with shorter labeled shelf-life. The acceptance of vacuum packaged beef steak increased with the level of education, the income level, the presence of children in the household, and decreased with FTNS scores, and the level of concern regarding food safety. Participants who considered colour of the beef steak was important when buying it were more likely to refuse to try vacuum packaged beef steak. Openness to innovation, attitude toward food technologies and food safety perceptions influenced consumers' acceptance of the vacuum package technology. FTNS scores did not increase with age, education, or income. However, people aged 35 to 44 had the lowest FTNS scores. People with an associate degree were most likely to try new things compared to other educational categories.

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