Understanding consumer attitudes toward bone-in chicken
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Summary

In-depth interviews will be used to investigate consumer attitudes toward bone-in chicken. Interviews will focus on the general perspective of dark meat chicken and more specifically, the impact of the black bone colour stain on consumers' overall acceptance of the product.

Background

Consumer choices for meat have undergone dramatic changes over the past few decades as consumers today are choosing to eat chicken over red meats. Canadian per capita chicken intake has increased by 135% since the 1970s while beef intake has decreased by 35% during this time (AAFC, 2008) This change in meat choice is attributed by the growing concern for health. However, much of the research regarding consumer attitudes toward chicken is now outdated and little is known about the attitudes toward bone-in chicken.

One issue that has been overlooked in previous research is the dark colour stain that can appear on the meat of cooked bone-in chicken thighs. This colour stain, known as black bone, is a major concern for the poultry industry as it is considered to be a defect and possibly undesirable to consumers. However, little research has been done on the impact of this issue on consumers' attitudes toward bone-in chicken.

Specific objectives are:

1) To identify and understand the factors affecting consumer attitudes toward bone-in chicken

2) To investigate whether colour stains in bone-in chicken thighs are acknowledged by consumers and the impact on overall attitude toward bone-in chicken meat.

Methods

Consumers of bone-in chicken will be recruited from local grocery stores . Approximately 30 participants will be interviewed using a consumer science technique called **Laddering** : *a one-on-one semi-structured interview using direct probing questions*

Laddering is based on the Means-end Chain Theory (MEC) which assumes that consumers choose products based on the personal benefits associated to the product. It suggests that the attributes that consumers associate with a product will lead to personally relevant consequences that will ultimately fulfill a personal value

Thus, MEC = Attribute ⇨ Consequence ⇨ Value

Expected Results

The data collected from individual laddering interviews will be condensed into a single Hierarchical Value Map (HVM) which illustrate the graphical outline of the resulting MECs (Figure 1). HVMs represent only the most common associations made by consumers in order to understand their underlying motives for choosing bone-in chicken. Furthermore, we expect to identify the factors that influence consumer attitudes toward bone-in chicken and determine whether or not their attitudes are affected by the black bone colour stain.
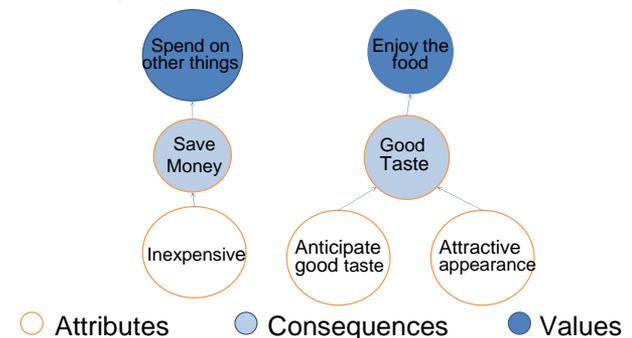
Figure 1. A typical HVM adapted from Lind (2007) illustrating the attributes, consequences and values associated with pork

What does this mean?

The results from this study will be valuable to the Canadian Poultry industry to gain insight on current consumer attitudes toward bone-in chicken, the effect of black bone colour stains on consumers and the overall attitude toward dark meat in general. This information will allow the poultry industry to make informed decisions on ways to meet consumer needs.

Acknowledgements

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