Consumer behaviour in the context of meat

Marleen Onwezen
Wageningen Economic Research

Dr. Marleen Onwezen; Sr. researcher and project manager consumer behaviour
Wageningen Economic Research

Social and economic, independent and applied research. Internationally leading. Our unique data, models and knowledge offer insights and integral advice for policy and decision-making.

- **Current status: perception & consumption of meat**
- **5 consumer myths: Factors that explain consumer acceptance**
Meat consumption decreases since 2010

![Graph showing meat consumption from 2005 to 2015]

*Figure 1* Vleesverbruik a) per hoofd van de bevolking in Nederland, 2005-2015 (kg)

a) Op basis van karkasgewicht (gewicht met been).

Terluin et al., 2016; Vleesconsumptie per hoofd van de bevolking in Nederland, 2005-2015
Climate change

UN urges global move to meat and dairy-free diet

Lower consumption of animal products is necessary to save the world from the worst impacts of climate change, UN report says.

Global food security

If we assume these trends set through, it is necessary to switch to a more plant-based diet to have enough food for the whole world in 2050.
healthiness...

De nieuwe Schijf van Vijf: meer groente, minder vlees

Societal pressure...

Vlees eten wordt het nieuwe roken

Contrôle op vlees is in handen van tandloze tijger
Agrifoodmonitor: Consumer perception of meat sector

- >3000 respondents
- Societal appreciation Agri & Food sector including subsectors (e.g., pig and poultry farming)
- Identify factors to explain societal appreciation

- Consumers have a lower societal appreciation of pig and poultry farming

And also in comparison with other production-related industries
Sector under pressure

*Thus, meat consumption decreases and the societal appreciation of the meat sector is relatively low.*

- Consumer perceptions towards meat
- 5 consumer myths
Often said...though not fully true

**Myth 1: Consumers only care for price**

Importance of motives for food choice 2012-2016

- Egoistical values most important for consumer food choices
- The egoistical values became less relevant in 2016→sustainable values relatively more important
Importance of motives for food versus meat-specific choices

Sustainable motives more relevant in the context of meat

Myth 1

- Consumers may find egoistical values most relevant, though sustainable values are also important
- Sustainable values become more important
- Sustainable values especially relevant in context of meat
...THE consumer...

**Myth 2: all consumers are the same.....**

**Consumer segmentation**

- Many different consumers! Look around 😊
- Segmentation=Method to find groups of homogenous consumers
- For example:
  - Onwezen et al., 2009
  - 2017 data collected again
Different segments that think & act differently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainable consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sustainable when affordable and healthy</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feeling familiar &amp; authentic</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Middle man</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cheap &amp; convenient</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Convenience &amp; health</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

• All consumers indicate that the environment is medium important, though segment 1 and 2 indicate the environment is most important.
• AND these consumers also behave more environmentally friendly.

Foodprofiler: data collection in progress

• Consumers might also differ across contexts


• 2017: Netherlands, England, Germany, Belgium

• Better insights in...
  • what people eat
  • why they eat what they eat
  • in what context

• ....by developing an innovative data collection method.
Myth 2

- Consumers differ in the way they think and act
- Even the same consumer has different motivations and accompanied behaviour during different contexts, like eating moments and eating locations
Saying is doing....

**Myth 3: What consumers say is what they do...**

'Many say they love animals. But all that the evidence suggests is that they love to eat them.'

(Rod Preece, 2008)
Strategic ignorance

- Thus, 27%/28% seems indifferent regarding animal welfare issues. Though in reality they strategically ignore these animal welfare issues.
- Because they want to feel good about themselves. They do not want to think too much about difficult issues.
Furthermore... Intention ≠ behaviour

- For example, Voedselbalans (2010)
- 3748 respondents
- Survey to explain consumer food choices

**Intention is not the same as behaviour!!**
**Only 46-59% of behaviour explained by intention**

Myth 3

- Consumers may believe they will act in a certain way, though in reality this is not always the case
- Consumer versus civilian paradox
- Unconscious behaviour, habitual behaviour
Consumers are rational decision makers

**Myth 4: If we provide consumers with more information, then they will make the ‘right choice’**
Factors that explain consumer appreciation of Agri & Food sector

- Motives (e.g., health environment, animal welfare, safety, affordable)
- Reputation
- Trust (safety, production, and cooperation)
- Identification
- Commitment
- Preference for Dutch products (nationalism)
- Ambivalence
- Strategic ignorance
- Social norm
- Subjective knowledge
- Psychological distance
- Suspicion of strategic behavior
- Importance of issues
- Perception of policy measures
- Emotions
- Consumption
- Demographics
Emotions and affect

- Consumer is not a rational deliberator, but a feeling-based intuitive decision maker

  → More subjective knowledge even associated with a decreased societal appreciation (possibly due to sceptical informed consumer)

  → Consumers aim to feel good about themselves

  → Commitment most relevant explanatory factor

  → Emotions play a significant role

Motivation, Opportunity, Ability: MOA

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<tbody>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABILITY</td>
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<td></td>
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Rothschild, 1999
**Myth 4:** Consumers are not only rational decision makers, affect, emotions and social and physical environment are also relevant.

**Myth 5:** Consumers take all decisions consciously.
A nudge in the ‘right’ direction: nudging

Famous example organ donation: Opt-in versus opt-out

Virtual supermarket

- Provides the possibility to test several adaptions in a retail store, e.g., prices, shelves, decoration, marketing
Trays most optimal choice

- 77 respondents
- Van Wijk et al., 2013; het vleesschap onder de loep
- Small differences in time to find a product, and sustainable choice
- Stickers and trays most often sustainable choice
- Trays evaluated as most orderly and convenient
How about unconscious communication?

- 1221 light users of organic products
- Van Wijk-Jansen, Onwezen & van den Broek, 2013 bio-food magazine
- RQ: which aspects on a package influence consumer decision making?
### Choice experiment: levels of variation

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<th>EKO+European logo</th>
<th>Organic (word)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Better for all of us</td>
<td>Better for world</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Director WNF</td>
<td>Farmer Arie</td>
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### Which cues are most affective?

<table>
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<th>Most negative</th>
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<td><strong>Style picture</strong></td>
<td>photo</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sender</strong></td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Yvon Jaspers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message</strong></td>
<td>Better for the world/ all of us</td>
<td>Better for yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lettertype</strong></td>
<td>No differences</td>
<td>No differences</td>
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• Meat consumption is decreasing
• Perception towards meat and meat sector is relatively negative

5 take home messages:
1. Consumers care for more than price. Other motives like health, taste, but also sustainable values, are also relevant
   ➔ Make product combinations with egoistical and sustainable values when promoting sustainable products

2. Not all consumers are the same
   ➔ User consumer segmentation to target specific consumer groups in a personalised way

3. Intention is not the same as behaviour

4. Information is not always the solution: emotions, social and physical environment also relevant
   ➔ Go further then providing information, consumers need to be motivated, able and have the opportunity

5. Consumers decide often unconsciously
   ➔ Do not only focus on conscious decision making, marketing and nudging can also be used to provide an environment that steers in the ‘right’ direction

Questions?

Marleen Onwezen
Marleen.onwezen@wur.nl
070-3358175