

Food involvement in choice of grocery store

Abstract

For many years, marketing researchers have considered issues related to consumers' store choice across various purchasing situations (Carpenter & Moore, 2006). During the last decade we have seen a progression of consumption and consumers have today more products to choose from. Involvement is an important and well-researched construct in the consumer behaviour literature (Gross and Brown, 2008) and it is acknowledged as a key determinant in consumers' shopping behaviour (Steenkamp and Wedel, 1991). Involvement refers to feelings of interest, concern and enthusiasm held towards product categories and brands (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Depending on the involvement the consumer feels for the possible purchase, the consumer will spend more or less time on information processing (Cacioppo and Petty, 1979; Celsi and Olson, 1988; Mantel and Kardes, 1999; Meyers-Levy and Peracchio, 1996) and on evaluating the choice (Berman and Evans, 2005). The importance of consumer involvement in general marketing literature has been put forward as a segmentation criterion, classifying consumers into highly involved consumers and lowly involved consumers towards certain products or brands (Warrington and Shim, 2000). The behaviour of consumers also differs according to the place where they are shopping and their involvement level with the act of shopping (Berman & Evans, 2005; Puccinelli et al., 2009). The involvement with a retail channel significantly increases young people's communication about the time and money spent in the channel and also future purchase intentions (Lueg et al., 2006).

Some products have been seen as high-involvement products, while others as low-involvement products. However, more recent studies (e.g. Swoboda et al., 2009) have questioned this, pointing out that it is rather unrealistic. Even though the products might not be high-involvement products as recon by previous research, different consumers might still feel different amount of involvement in purchasing them due to their involvement and interest. One type of products that have traditionally been seen as low involvement products is food products (Beharrell and Denison, 1995). Yet, consumers that feel passionate about cooking food might be more involved in the grocery shopping and therefore differ in behaviour from consumers that do not feel involved in the purchase situation. Most previous research on involvement is connected to a specific product or brand. Hence, there is no clear definition for consumer involvement with food or a generally accepted method to measure it. Focus on previous involvement research has been on certain products and brands. The purpose of the present study is to establish a food involvement indexes and to investigate the effect of involvement on consumers' grocery shopping.

In March to April of 2010 e-mails were sent to a panel of Swedish residents managed by a market-research firm who by telephone or via Internet recruits panel members among people expressing an interest in participating in consumer surveys. The panel members contacted was asked to access a web address and answer a questionnaire for which they were awarded points later exchangeable for lottery tickets or cinema vouchers. Usable questionnaires were obtained from 1,023 participants representing a response rate of 55%. Participants' age varied from 18 to 65 years with an average of 41.9 years which is close to the national average of 41.0 years (Statistics Sweden, 2008). There were 49.7% women, which are close to the national average of approximately 50% in the sampled age range. Close to half of the participants had an annual income between 100,000 and 500,000 SEK (1 SEK = USD 0.20). In 2007 the median income in Sweden was 203,600 SEK. Almost two thirds of the participants had more than 12 years of education, which substantially exceeds the national

average of 15.3%. The consumers were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), how much they agreed to twelve statements about food.

Table 1 shows principal component analysis (PCA) extracted three components accounting for 73.05% of total variance. The feasibility of performing a PCA was indicated by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olin measure of .88 (>.70) and a significant ($p < .001$) Bartlett's test of sphericity (Hair et al., 2006). The loadings after oblique rotation are given in Table X. It can be seen that most of the statements regarding consumers' preferences about food have high loadings on only one of the components. On the basis of the PCA results, we constructed three aggregated indexes (Involvement general, Involvement healthy, and Involvement exciting) of the aggregated preferences about food.

Table 1. Obliquely rotated loadings from principal component analysis

Consumers' preferences about food	Component		
	1	2	3
Food means a lot to me	.827	.187	.191
I rather choose healthy food	.162	.154	.894
Tasty food is quality of life for me	.791	.251	.204
I like new and untested food	.238	.864	.148
Food means much to me	.825	.235	.183
I mostly eat healthy food	.151	.136	.883
That the food is tasty is important for me	.801	.197	.153
To try new dishes is exiting	.292	.840	.141
The interest for food has a big meaning in my life	.638	.493	.157
Same dishes every week is nothing for me	.284	.620	.178
I am a person that enjoys tasty food	.747	.314	.135
I feel good when eating healthy	.238	.155	.757
<i>Note: Loadings in boldface are the highest.</i>			

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations of the ratings of each statement as well as averaged for aggregated indexes of consumers' preferences about food. All three Cronbach's alphas >.70 suggesting that the measures of the aggregated indexes have acceptable reliability.

Table 2. Mean (M) and standard deviation (s) for the average ratings of aggregated involvement (n = 1026) and M, s and Cronbach's α for indexes of consumers' preferences about food on a scale from 1-5.

Involvement	M	s	α
Involvement general	3.8	0.8	.91
Food means a lot to me	3.7	1.0	
Tasty food is quality of life for me	3.9	0.9	
Food means much to me	3.8	1.0	
That the food is tasty is important for me	4.0	0.9	
The interest for food has a big meaning in my life	3.2	1.2	
I am a person that enjoys tasty food	4.0	0.9	
Involvement healthy	3.3	1.0	.85
I rather choose healthy food	3.3	1.1	
I mostly eat healthy food	3.0	1.1	
I feel good when eating healthy	3.6	1.1	

Involvement exiting	3.2	1.0	.79
I like new and untested food	3.3	1.1	
To try new dishes is exiting	3.6	1.1	
Same dishes every week is nothing for me	2.8	1.2	

We will further investigate the effect these involvement indexes have on grocery shopping.

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