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Trends in Consumer Demographics and Willingness to Pay for Perceived Eating Quality Levels of Lamb

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Objectives

The relationships between the demographics of lamb consumers and their willingness-to-pay (WTP) for 4 eating quality (EQ) levels were analyzed for this study.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in 5 areas across the United States: Ohio (OH), Florida (FL), Texas (TX), Colorado (CO), and California (CA). A demographic questionnaire was distributed to consumers ($n = 1440$) during a lamb tasting session to acquire the following variables: gender (GEN), age, education (EDU), occupation (OCC), heritage (HER), income (INC), number of adults in household (NOA), number of children (NOC), consumption (CON), preferred degree of doneness (DOD). Additionally, the state in which the consumer participated was used as a factor that could affect WTP. At the conclusion of a tasting session, which consisted of 7 lamb samples representing various muscles, genders, breeds, weights, fatness levels, and pH levels, consumers were asked how much they would pay for each of the 4 quality levels [Unsatisfactory (UNS), Good, Better than every day (BTE), and Premium (PREM)], using line scales anchored from $0/lb. to $40/lb. WTP of each EQ level was analyzed using the GLIMMIX procedure of SAS (SAS Inst. Inc., Cary, NC) with each of the aforementioned demographic traits considered as fixed effects. Differences in LS means were determined ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Results

Heritage and consumption affected ($P < 0.05$) WTP at each EQ level. African Americans were willing to pay more than White and Native Americans for UNS, Good, and PREM EQ levels. Additionally, consumers who said they consumed lamb daily were willing to pay the least for all EQ levels. Furthermore, state impacted ($P < 0.05$) WTP for BTE and PREM EQ levels, with OH and CO consumers willing to pay less than consumers from TX. Additionally, there was an influence of OCC on WTP ($P < 0.05$) of UNS and Good EQ levels; consumers who worked in sales and service or as a laborer were willing to pay more than homemakers at both EQ levels. Income only had an influence ($P < 0.05$) on WTP of PREM EQ, with consumers whose household income was $50 to 75,000 USD paying the least. Preferred DOD impacted ($P < 0.05$) WTP for all perceived quality levels except for BTE; consumers who preferred blue rare would pay the least for UNS and Good quality lamb, but would pay more per pound than consumers whose preferred DOD was rare for PREM quality lamb. Gender only influenced ($P < 0.05$) WTP for UNS lamb with males willing to pay more than females. Moreover, age influenced ($P < 0.05$) WTP; consumers under 20 would pay more for BTE quality lamb than people over the age of 40, and would pay more than people over the age 50 for PREM quality lamb. NOC influenced ($P < 0.05$) WTP, with consumers who had more than 6 children willing to pay the least for UNS. Lastly, number of NOA and EDU had no impact ($P > 0.05$) on consumer WTP, regardless of EQ level.

Conclusion

Based on these results, HER and CON had a significant impact on WTP for each EQ level, but NOA and EDU had no influence on WTP at any EQ level. Preferred DOD influenced the WTP of 3 out 4 EQ levels. State where the test was conducted and increasing age only influenced the top 2 EQ levels, while OCC only had an impact only on the lower 2 EQ levels. Finally, gender and NOC played little role in WTP, as each trait only impacted WTP of UNS lamb. Likewise, income had little impact on WTP, although it did influence WTP of PREM quality lamb.