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Can You Tell The Difference

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Theorists have been led to believe that there is a gender difference when it comes to how you eat. In my present study I recruited sixteen females and fifteen males who participated in a survey and taste test to see if there was a gender difference between males and females in regards to identifying store brand food and name brand food. I found that there is no gender difference in the ability to name brand food and store brand food. I plan on presenting my study to several grocery stores and showing them my results. The grocery stores could then further my study and publish their results to marketing firms and help them on how to decide on advertising and marketing products.

Will males and females differ in being able to tell the difference between name brand food and store brand food? I chose this topic because males and females differ in so many obvious ways; it will be interesting to find out if they differ in not-so-obvious ways. I also chose to do this research because of the price differences between name brand food and store brand food. Will my participants be able to tell a taste difference?

Drewnowski (1997) says taste responses are influenced by a range of genetic, physiological and metabolic variables. Drewnowski (1997) also says the impact of taste factors on food intake further depends on sex and age. He used taste functions that were distinguished between taste acuity and taste sensitivity. Drewnowski also dealt with sweet taste preferences, sensory responses to fats, and the mechanisms of pleasure.

Bates, Prentice, and Finch (1999) say there are gender differences in food choices. They used surveys, a health and lifestyle interview, a four day weighted diet record, and a fasting blood sample for biochemical indices for their study. Their conclusion was that there was a gender difference in food choices. Unfortunately I was unable to go into that much detail with my study because of time and money constraints.

Step toe and Wardle (1999) shows that the four most important motivational factors in choosing food are sensory appeal, health, price, and convenience of purchasing. So they are saying these factors influence what you buy. Although this doesn't mention anything about sex differences, it gives us important information on how people choose what they buy. In Steptoe and Wardle's study the comparison was between high and low education attainment groups. Neither Income nor occupations were suitable for segmenting the sample in this survey.

Pirouznia (2001) shows that some factors that could influence adolescent eating behaviors include peer influences, nutrition knowledge, mass media, and parental dietary habits. The mass media promotes mostly name brand products, so the mass media could determine if name brand food is consumed. This study deals with adolescents. I don't have any adolescents in my study, but the involvement of the mass media as promoters of name brand food products, was enough to make this relevant for my study.

Bisogni, Connors, Devine, Carol, & Sobal (2001) says that many participants used descriptors for the identities related to eating that reflected self-images of personal attributes other than eating practices. They used open-ended, in depth interview to examine identity and eating from the perspectives of adults.

These previous studies I mentioned lead you to believe that there is a difference in eating habits. I hypothesize that there will also be gender differences in eating habits. Specifically I hypothesize that females will be able to tell a difference between name brand food and store brand food more so than males since females pay more attention as to what they are eating. I used a taste test and short survey to test my hypothesis.

Method

Participants

I needed a total of thirty-one participants for my study, sixteen were females and fifteen were males. There will be a wide range of age for this study; I want to get a feel for the differences in males and females along a wide spectrum of age ranges.

I plan on recruiting my participants in different ways. I will be making use of the human subject pool that is offered at Lindenwood University. These participants will all be college students with common ages ranging between eighteen and twenty-two. I will encounter a few people that may be older than that. I will also recruit my family to participate in my study, as well as friends and co-workers to come up with a grand total of thirty-one participants.

Materials

My hypothesis that females will be able to tell the difference in name brand food and store brand food more so than males will be tested by using a taste test. A survey will be distributed asking several questions about name brand and store brand food (see Appendix A). Some sample questions are: Which do you prefer name brand food or store brand food, and which do you normally consume name brand food or store brand food? The participants will also get two bags of pretzels along with the survey. When instructed they will taste each of the pretzels and determine which one is name brand and

which one is store brand. The brand of pretzels will be Snyder's and Schnuck's brand. I will have consent forms for each participant to sign. Also in the case of the human subject pool, there will be a sign in sheet and a participant receipt for each participant. I will need a table or desk with chairs for participants to complete the survey along with pens for the participants to use to fill out survey and sign forms. I will also provide feedback information forms to each participant after he/she has completed the survey.

Procedure

After participants have been recruited to participate in my study I will provide them with two consent forms (one for them to keep and one to hand in to me). They will read it over and if they are willing to participate in my study they will sign and date it on the bottom. At that time I will hand out the survey along with the two bags of pretzels (A&B), with each bag containing five pretzels. They will complete the survey within 10 minutes then they will hand in the survey to me. I will provide them with a feedback letter at the completion of their time. If they are participating in the human subject pool, I will have them sign in and provide them with a participants receipt. Since I will be testing the differences between two groups (men and women) this will be a between-subjects design. After collecting all of my data I will start analyzing the data and conduct a Chi-Square to see if my hypothesis will be supported. I will also run descriptive statistics on other questions.

Results

In order to test the hypothesis that females will be able to tell the difference between name brand food and store brand food more so than males, a chi-square analysis was conducted with the correct guess of name brand as the dependent variable and gender

as the independent variable. The results revealed a no statistically significant effect of gender on being able to correctly guess name brand food, $\chi^2(1) = .519$, $p > .05$. This led me to accept the null hypothesis.

More results found that 25 participants compared to only six participants consume name brand food, while 29 participants prefer name brand food compared to only two that prefer store brand food.

Discussion

I found that there is no significant difference between gender when it comes to name brand pretzels and store brand pretzels. A possible explanation for this is that the study limited the food choices by only providing the participants with two types of pretzels. Some participants may have needed more food choices to make their proper decision. For example, the study could have included potato chips, cookies, pretzels and crackers then I could measure the differences using all the choices of food.

The finding that twenty-five participants normally consume name brand while twenty-nine prefer name brand is an interesting incidental finding. Price of store brand products could be the reason why people chose store brand over name brand. Four people chose that they prefer store brand but consume name brand. This will be an interesting study I could take on.

After looking at the data I realized that most people chose store brand pretzels as the name brand pretzels. Twenty-one participants chose store brand as the name brand while only ten guessed the name brand correctly. I could do further research in this area and if my results remain constant I could submit my results to grocery stores across the country that could use it as they advertise their products.

Some limitations of my study include the sample size. I would have really liked to get more people because the larger the sample size the more significant my results would be. The study also limited the food choices to pretzels only; maybe when this research gets replicated it could include several different types of food.

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Appendix A

Survey

- 1) What is your sex? M___ F___
- 3) Which Bag contains Name Brand Pretzels? Bag A___ or Bag B___
- 5) Which do you normally consume? Name Brand food___ or Store brand food___
- 6) In general which do you prefer?
Name brand food products___ or Store brand food products___