Food Quality and Preference 39 (2015) 16–27

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Food Quality and Preference

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/foodqual

Situational appropriateness of beer is influenced by product familiarity

Davide Giacalone [a,1], Michael Bom Frøst [a], Wender L.P. Bredie [a], Bénédicte Pineau [b], Denise C. Hunter [b], Amy G. Paisley [b], Michelle K. Beresford [b], Sara R. Jaeger [b,*]

[a] Department of Food Science, Faculty of Science, University of Copenhagen, Rolighedsvej 30, DK-1958 Frederiksberg C, Denmark
[b] The New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research Ltd., 120 Mt. Albert Road, Private Bag 92169, Auckland Mail Centre, Auckland 1142, New Zealand

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 1 March 2014
Received in revised form 27 May 2014
Accepted 17 June 2014
Available online 25 June 2014

Keywords:
Context
Familiarity
Appropriateness
Beer
Consumer research

ABSTRACT

Explicit account of contextual variables can enhance the ability to understand and predict consumers' food-related behavior. One aspect that has hitherto received little attention is whether context equally affects familiar and unfamiliar food products. The matter is investigated in four consumer studies ($N = 76$, $N = 97$, $N = 93$, and $N = 145$), using beer images varying in familiarity as test stimuli. Using the situational appropriateness framework, we derived a quantitative characterization of product – context associations, revealing major differences between beers. The data analysis showed a two-dimensional product space that separated beers according to familiarity and beer styles. Familiar beers were primarily considered appropriate for refreshments and while attending sport events, while novel ones were perceived as more self-indulgent and appropriate for dining events and special occasions. These associations were robust across studies, suggesting that contextual evaluations are important in this product category. The level of familiarity strongly correlated with usage versatility, and significantly affected the perceived appropriateness for specific usage-contexts, possibly acting as a cue to infer product quality and performance.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Situational appropriateness and food-related consumer behavior

Consumer research has long maintained that explicit account of contextual variables can enhance the ability to understand and predict behavior (Belk, 1974, 1975; Sandell, 1968). Specifically within food-oriented consumer research (Meiselman, 2008), a growing number of studies have demonstrated that both preference and choice of food and beverages are affected by a variety of contextual influences, including social influences (Ariely & Levav, 2000; de Castro, 1991), environmental factors (Bell & Meiselman, 1995; Bell, Meiselman, Pierson, & Reeve, 1994; de Graaf et al., 2005; Edwards, Meiselman, Edwards, & Lesher, 2003; Meiselman, Johnson, Reeve, & Crouch, 2000), temporal aspects (Kramer, Rock, & Engell, 1992; Rozin & Tuorila, 1993), and accompanying meal items (Hersleth, Mevik, Næs, & Guinard, 2003; Moskowitz & Klarman, 1977). Awareness that consumers behave differently in different situations have prompted the development of a number of methodological approaches based on contextual segmentation, i.e., on identification of perceived product benefits across different situations (Dubow, 1992; Jaeger, Bava, Worch, Dawson, & Marshall, 2011; Jaeger, Marshall, & Dawson, 2009; Köster & Mojet, 2006). Of particular relevance within this stream of research is the approach based on judgments of situational appropriateness originally proposed by Schutz (Cardello & Schutz, 1996; Schutz, 1988, 1994), who adapted a basic anthropological technique (Stefflre, 1971) for application in food studies. Briefly, consumers evaluate products and usage situations simultaneously, essentially being asked how well a product (or a set of products) would fit each of the given usage contexts (varying in e.g., time of the day, location, presence of others, etc.). The appropriateness framework has been utilized over the years with a variety of product categories, to study the effect of different intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of foods – such as different sensory intensity levels, nutritional and label information, packaging and processing (e.g., Bruhn & Schutz, 1986; Jack, Piggott, & Paterson, 1994; Jaeger, 2000; Lähteenmäki & Tuorila, 1997; Resurreccion, 1986; Schutz, Cardello, & Winterhalter, 2005) – and established itself as a simple methodology to investigate perceptions of food products as defined by usage contexts.

The role of product familiarity

In spite of the growing attention given to the effects of contexts in food research, there is still need of research addressing some

---

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +64 9 925 7035; fax: +64 9 815 4201.
E-mail address: sara.jaeger@plantandfood.co.nz (S.R. Jaeger).

[1] This work was initiated while D. Giacalone was visiting PhD student at the New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research, Auckland, New Zealand.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2014.06.012
0950-3293/© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

unexplored aspects. With regards to situational appropriateness, one aspect that has received little attention to date is how such judgments are influenced by consumer's degree of familiarity with food products, in spite of suggestive evidence in this direction. For example, in a study comparing consumers' perceptions of familiar versus novel fruits, Jaeger, Rossiter, and Lau (2005) observed that consumers could not readily think of situations in which they would use novel fruits, and suggested that choice of fruit may be driven by product familiarity. King and colleagues (King, Meiselman, Hottenstein, Work, & Cronk, 2007) explicitly suggest that future attention be given, among other things, at what foods are more likely to be susceptible to contextual influences and whether this is related to initial level of product familiarity.

Product familiarity can be defined as the evaluative judgment that a consumer makes regarding his/her subjective knowledge about a product (Park & Lessig, 1981; Raju, 1977). Familiarity is related to the amount of previous exposure with the focal product, and has been found to be strongly related to product typicality, i.e., the degree to which a product is representative of its overall category concept (Schwanenflugel & Rey, 1986). In general, consumers tend to be somewhat reluctant to try very novel and unfamiliar products. This reluctance stems from lack of understanding of the product's value and potential usage, and from aversion to the learning costs associated with effectively using a new product (Mukherjee & Hoyer, 2001; Shugan, 1980). While for familiar products, a consumer can easily retrieve relevant characteristics and determine whether that product is appropriate for an intended use more or less irrespective of context and external elements (Goodman, Broniarczyk, Griffin, & McAlisher, 2013), the same task is more difficult for unfamiliar products. For unfamiliar products, contextual elements can provide a frame of reference with regards to possible usages, for example, by orienting consumers' attention towards particular features that may be of salience in relation to usages in a given context (Herr, 1989; Hoeffler, 2003; Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991; Veryzer, 1998; Warlop & Ratneshwar, 1993). Accordingly, extant literature in consumer research suggests that contextual influences might be more relevant for consumers' choice of novel/unfamiliar products, particularly because contexts have been shown to facilitate consumers' cognitive categorization of unfamiliar items. Evidence for this argument emerged also in the field of food choice and acceptance. For example, Tuorila, Meiselman, Cardello, and Lesher (1994), and Mielby and Frøst (2010) demonstrated that providing verbal information (as part of a context manipulation) increased the acceptability of unfamiliar food dishes. Conversely, other authors have suggested that acceptance and choice of familiar and well-liked foods might be relatively less influenced by specific consumption contexts (King, Weber, Meiselman, & Lv, 2004; King et al., 2007).

Aims of the research

There is hitherto little understanding of the role of product familiarity plays in consumers' judgments of situational appropriateness of food and beverages. Gaining such knowledge would be beneficial both from a theoretical standpoint – i.e., furthering the concept of situational appropriateness by including another product-relevant dimension – and from a practical standpoint – i.e., aiding food companies with the positioning of new food products, since judgments of situational appropriateness influence how consumers form consideration sets (Johnson & Lehmann, 1997; Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991).

The present research starts to fill this gap by focusing on a case study: situational appropriateness of beers varying in degree of familiarity, evaluated by New Zealand consumers. Beer lends itself very well as a case study; past research has established that a number of contextual influences have an impact on hedonic appreciation and choice of this popular beverage (Allison & Uhl, 1964; Caporale & Monteleone, 2004; Coquillat et al., 2009; Hajdu, Major, & Lakner, 2007; Lee, Frederick, & Ariely, 2006; Mohr et al., 2001; Sester et al., 2013). Further, beer is a very traditional product in New Zealand (it accounts for 63% of all available alcohol for sale (Carroll, 2011), and is therefore particularly suited for exploring consumers' product use evaluations (Caporale & Monteleone, 2004; Sester, Dacremont, Deroy, & Valentin, 2013). Finally, the need for further studies investigating the role of familiarity in shaping consumers' contextual evaluations of beer has been recently brought to attention (Giacalone, Duerlund, Bøegh-Petersen, Bredie, & Frøst, 2014; Sester et al., 2013).

The specific objectives of this research were:

Obj. 1: To explore contextual evaluations of beers varying in familiarity. It is anticipated that different beers will be associated with different usage contexts, and that these associations can be harnessed by the situational appropriateness approach in a reliable (i.e., repeatable across studies) way.

Obj. 2: To study the role of product familiarity as a moderating factor for these associations. Because familiar products are encountered more easily by consumers, we expect familiarity to be linked to *versatility*, defined as the total number of usage contexts for which a given beer will be perceived as appropriate (Ratneshwar & Shocker, 1991). On the other hand, different contexts may trigger a different degree of novelty seeking, so we expect familiar and unfamiliar beers to be associated to different usages.

Materials and methods

These objectives were investigated across four consumer studies, all of which were similarly structured.

In order to facilitate a quantitative characterization of product–contexts associations, a questionnaire was designed using beer images and names as stimuli. Vision is the most important sensory modality at the point of purchase, suggesting that product appearance is a significant cue for assessing the perceived usage appropriateness of products (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Fenko, Schifferstein, & Hekkert, 2010; Mugge & Schoormans, 2012a). Further, this stimulus format has been employed effectively in extant research on the same topic (e.g., Jaeger et al., 2005; Raats & Shepherd, 1992; Sester et al., 2013), and is known to enhance external validity of consumers' evaluations in product categories that depend strongly on visual inspection (Jaeger, Hedderley, & MacFie, 2001; Vriens, Loosschilder, Rosbergen, & Wittink, 1998). For each beer image shown, consumers evaluated appropriateness for different contexts and perceived familiarity, and the information was related via correlational measures. Relevant usage contexts were chosen according to existing classifications of situational variables affecting food choice and acceptance (Bisogni, Winter Falk, & Madore, 2007; Blake, Bisogni, Sobal, Devine, & Jastran, 2007; Meiselman, 2008): *locations* – including the general location (e.g., at home, at a restaurant, etc.), and the specific place within the location (e.g., at home in front of the TV), *occasions* (e.g., at a rugby match, at a concert), *social surroundings* (e.g., for guests, to impress someone), *physiological processes* (e.g., as a thirst-quencher) and *mental processes* (e.g., as a treat for myself).

Study 1

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of consumers from the general population in Auckland ($N = 76$, 50% women, aged 18–60), recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate.

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4317090

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/4317090

Daneshyari.com