NEW BEEF PACKAGING OPTION AT RETAIL

AN EVALUATION OF ON-PACK NUTRITION CLAIMS & INDIVIDUAL PORTIONS
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OVERVIEW
KEY FINDING SUMMARY
NEW BEEF PACKAGING OPTION AT RETAIL
AN EVALUATION OF ON-PACK NUTRITION CLAIMS & INDIVIDUAL PORTIONS

• Consumers desire convenience in their often hectic lives. While there are currently no major complaints with the meat case, packaging options that provide greater flexibility with meal planning is something that is welcomed by some consumers.

• This concept of pre-portioned individual serving beef packages with nutrition forward claims generates high purchase interest for many consumers. While there is strong appeal, the idea of individual portions is not for everyone. Offering choices in packaging size and types of packaging are needed fit varying consumer needs.

• Overall, this new beef packaging with on-pack nutrition claims and individual portions delivers on convenience as well as enhancing beef’s health perceptions.
  • Convenience for this concept come from several elements:
    • Vacuum sealed packaging
    • Individually portioned trimmed cuts, with minimal to no visible external fat
    • Cooking instructions with highlighting the cook time needed
    • Ease in shopping – easier to distinguish cut type
  • Beef’s health perceptions are improved through:
    • Calling out grams of protein and calories on the front of the package
    • Telling consumers that the cut is lean
    • Individually portioned trimmed cuts, with minimal to no visible external fat
**Objectives**

1. To understand if an individually portioned beef package that is heavy with nutrition claims impacts beef’s health perceptions.
2. To understand the appeal of this type of product.
   a. Who is interested in purchasing?
   b. Why interested?
      i. Packaging – what about the packaging?
      ii. Serving size – individual portioned servings
      iii. Vacuum sealed packages – extended shelf life
      iv. Nutrition claims
      v. Other packaging elements
3. To understand potential purchase behavior and frequency.
   a. How does this fit into beef (and other fresh meat) purchases? In addition to? Replacement?
   b. How often will this type of product be purchased?
   c. How does this type of product fit into meal planning and beef eating frequency?
4. To gain insight into purchase channels – could this product remove barriers for purchasing beef on-line? Would this product have appeal in a club store pack?
### Phases of Research

**June/July**

**On-Line Quant Concept Test**
- N=1059 – National Sample
  - Appeal – who, what?
  - How often?
  - Beef health perceptions
  - Purchase locations

**On-Line Qual Activity**
*In-Home Usage*
- N=44
  - NE – Shaw’s & Star Market Shoppers
  - Texas – HEB & Central Market Shoppers
  - Shopping experience
  - Packaging elements
  - Cooking of the product
  - Health perceptions
  - Fit into purchases

**August/Sept**

**In-Store Shop-Along & In-depth Interviews**
- N=22
  - HEB/Central Market
    - Houston, TX
    - San Antonio, TX
  - Shaw’s/Star Market
    - Boston, MA
  - Reaction at grocery shelf
  - In-depth Interview

**Comparison:**
- Test Package
  - In-Market Package (Unbranded)

**Comparison:**
- Traditionally Packaged Beef Product
  - In-Market Product

Note: Hurricane Harvey took place during the Qual phases of this study. Due to this, fewer interviews took place in Houston.
2 ON-LINE QUANT CONCEPT EVALUATION
ON-LINE QUANT CONCEPT EVALUATION

Stimulus used in study
ON-LINE QUANT CONCEPT EVALUATION

Key Findings

• The concept of pre-portioned individual serving beef packages with nutrition forward claims generates strong appeal across all consumer groups with high purchase interest.

• Consumers indicate that this concept is likely to be incremental to current beef purchases.

• The concept improves beef health perceptions and is believed to assist with portion control.
The on-pack nutrition focused individually portioned beef products appeals to a variety of consumers.

**CONCEPT APPEAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

Interested shoppers are those who indicated they would probably or definitely purchase any of the products mentioned in H310.

**Source:** Y-Pulse Online Concept Test On-Pack Nutrition Claims & Individual Portions – July 2017
QUALITATIVE EVALUATION
ON-LINE IN-HOME
IN-STORE / IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS
QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

IN-STORE & IN-HOME

IN-STORE & IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS (IDI)

- 22 two hour interviews
  - In-store (20%)
  - IDI at nearby restaurant (80%)
- San Antonio, Houston, & Boston
- Age 23-70
- A variety of beef barriers and frequency of beef usage
- Mix of HH size and Kid/No Kid HH
- Stimulus used during IDIs:

IN-HOME – ON-LINE QUAL ACTIVITY

- 44 beef shoppers
- Two on-line qual activities each:
  - Activity 1: Purchase + Cook Beef (typical purchase - Flat Iron Steak, Center Cut Sirloin, or Beef Sirloin Steak Tips)
  - Activity 2: Purchase + Cook with In-market test product
- Texas (HEB or Central Markets) and North East (Shaw’s or Star Market)
- Mix of ages (Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers)
- Mix of Kid/No Kid HH

Conventional tray with overwrap

In-market test product

Note: Brand Name removed
THE CHALLENGE OF DINNER

• Modern life makes consumers short on time due to the pressures of work, kids, commuting, & other responsibilities

• Eating is expensive; people budget, are acutely aware of food costs

• Their goal: *I want real food at dinner that tastes great and I feel good about serving for what I am willing to spend*

• People have developed ways to achieve this:
  • Plan several meals at a time, buy in advance; keep backup food
  • Cook once for 2-3 meals; batch cook several meals & store in fridge or freezer
  • Post notes with a calendar of what needs to be done; help remember to thaw

• When things don’t go as planned, there is no dinner and unused beef is ready to spoil which causes some level of anxiousness

**There is an unmet need for dinner food flexibility—Proteins, including beef, aren’t meeting the need yet**

“Just last week my husband called and said, ‘I got pulled into a thing and I have to stay for dinner’. And I had a PLAN…You are thinking okay now I have to do this meat tomorrow…It is a pressure. I actually think about it.”

*Boston*

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
IN-STORE/IDI KEY LEARNING

BEEF COOKING PROWESS

- Spectrum of confidence spans demographics, but can skew by age

Confident Cooks
- Practiced, skilled, comfortable with beef, may be a little older; adept with appliances: grill, oven, stove, crockpot
- Happy to experiment, invent, but recipes are important part of repertoire
- Learned by being mentored by a parent, or their culture & trial and error

Less Confident Cooks
- Afraid to cook beef, lots of trial and error, stick to a few recipes that work
- Sensitive to thickness because thicker cuts are tricky & they lack skills to adapt:
  - If it says “great for grilling” but you don’t own a grill what do you do instead?
  - Struggle to achieve internal temp they want: “pink is elusive”
- Driven by the risk of wasting a meal, money
- Yearn for simple instructions, simple recipes, simple meals

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
IN-HOME – IDEAL BEEF PRODUCT

When asked to describe their ideal beef product before seeing In-Market Test product, many describe the core benefits the product.

IDEALS

Perfectly-sized portions that take the guesswork out of preparing meat and reduce waste

“My ideal beef product would be lean and the package would come with a reasonably small but filling portion of meat along with cooking ideas on the package.” - Janice D, Boomer, TX

Responsibly raised, antibiotic-free, grass-fed beef, etc.

“If we are talking a perfect world, start with a naturally raised cow. As in, grass fed, no antibiotics or hormones”. - Emily T, Millennial, TX

Consistently tender meat

“The most tender and already cut into the perfect portion size.” - Stacie P, Gen X, NE

Easy to read, color-coded packaging to make different cuts easily distinguishable

“As for packaging, I would like to see a color coded system in place to help people find cuts of meat easier.” - Rebecca J, Gen X, TX

Cooking recommendations or included flavorings

“For me, I love having marinated meats. I find them much more flavorful and appealing. So some sort of packaging that includes a marinade and/or spices would be ideal for me, one stop shopping.” - Constance P, Boomer, NE

Ideal thickness reveals difference between markets.

Texans have a cultural connection to thicker cuts, which are seen as higher quality. Northeasterners want thinner cuts that cook quickly.

“Since we grill outdoors in Texas a lot we like thick cut portions that are available in our area.” - Betty W, Gen X, TX

“My ideal beef product would be thinly sliced beef so I don’t feel like I’m choking on meat. Also it takes incredibly longer to cook thicker cuts of meat.” - Lachanda G, Gen X, NE

Source: Y-Pulse Online Qual Activity – September 2017
IN-STORE/IDI KEY LEARNING

PORTIONS

• The fist/palm analogy is widely known as the “proper” way to assess a portion but ounce size is unknown; also, oz. and lb. math is not well-comprehended
• In reality, fist/palm not typically used; portion is assessed by how the piece will look on a plate
• A moderate portion of beef is believed to be healthy
• Portioning is really not implemented unless a person is dieting
• Seen as inappropriate to serve small portions to guests or a cookout where quantity is king
• Attention is given to the reaction of eaters: my husband will look at it and say, “where’s the rest of my dinner?”
• Uniform portions/VSP make online shopping for beef more inviting

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
IN-STORE/IDI KEY LEARNING
NUTRITION

• People look for lean beef because they equate it to higher quality

• Low level belief that beef is good for you; people are ready to hear about beef’s healthy role. Some consumers realize they can eat more lean beef than other beef and still control calories or fat

• Limiting beef consumption vs. what you’d normally want is widely considered to be a healthy strategy
  • Heard this more than a specific limit like “you should only eat x times per week”

• Even if they can only afford it every once in a while, many will buy “non-conventional” proteins because they believe this practice heightens the overall healthiness of what is served at home; e.g., no preservatives/chemicals, organic, grass-fed, no antibiotics, etc.

“People are trying to have healthier food for our families and kids. You go to the pediatrician and they tell you these things and we are reading about things that are in our food or not in our food…Expense plays into it too. But every once in awhile when I feel I can spend the money… I buy organic produce or grass-fed sometimes if I can.” San Antonio

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
**IN-STORE/IDI KEY LEARNING**

**SPECIFIC NUTRITION CALLOUTS**

**Exact protein and calories** are surprising and exciting news and motivate purchase; elicits a range of emotional reactions

- At minimum the news reinforces this is a good purchase and that lean beef is even more acceptable to eat than they thought
- If person has higher involvement with calories/protein then this news = Wow!!

Even if looks lean, saying “lean” raises healthiness & low fat expectations

- There is a theme among some consumers of helping family members “eat lean”

**No preservatives** is important; while we heard no concern about them in beef, it produces a sigh relief (seems to be an aura around chicken)

**Nutrition Facts** reassures healthiness, consumers accustomed to/like it

- Says “there’s nothing to hide”; is proof of retailer & manufacturer confidence
- Educates about other content: low fat, low sodium, no carbs

**Zinc, B6, B12** not a motivator to buy, reinforces that beef is good for you

**Iron** is already known, nice to see but it’s not a motivator

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
IN-HOME – PREPARATION CONVENIENCE
In-Market product makes preparing fresh beef at home a simpler, faster, and easier process.

VACUUM PACK = LESS MESS
The vacuum sealed pack means less cleanup time and a lower “ick” factor for those who are less comfortable cooking with raw meat.

“At home, the way the package was wrapped in a thicker than normal plastic bag was awesome. It made the cleanup easier and I avoided getting raw meat juice everywhere.”
– Whitney K, Millennial, TX

“Cooking with it was sooooo easy. The packaging is super clean and you don’t have to worry about blood seeping through.”
– Emily T, Millennial, TX

PERFECTLY CUT PORTION = LESS TO DO
Unlike other meats they can purchase, The in-market product is a faster and easier meat to prepare: the product is essentially ready to cook right away.

“I didn’t have to cut off extra fat, skin, or tendon. It solves the issues of cleanliness and prep time – it’s for someone who is both counting calories and strapped for time.”
– Emily T, Millennial, TX

“It solves the problem of cooking for 2 – and doing it fast.”
– Marie C, Boomer, TX

“Truly Simple is for someone like me, who likes easy prep for making at home meals that are nutritious and tasty.”
– Melissa L, Boomer, TX

Source: Y-Pulse Online Qual Activity – September 2017
IN-STORE/IDI KEY LEARNING

VACUUM SEALED PACKAGING

• VSP has untapped potential; extended shelf life answers the unmet need for flexibility at dinner, yet VSP is not well understood
  • Exact shelf life of VSP is a total unknown, though sealing-out air is known; perception is VSP may be fresher for a couple of days longer than tray/wrap
  • Consumers aren’t sure why companies VS their products, but they find it more sanitary, easy to store and say there’s less freezer burn

• Longer shelf life excites; people immediately say “wow!” and instantly envision being able to serve a real meal on tough days
  • Can have beef more often, keep it on hand; don’t have to plan, fits weekdays
  • Replaces emergency dinners like frozen pizza or pb & j

• Thawing is a barrier to convenience & VSP overcomes the barrier; additionally, people readily see that they can freeze it if they want to

“I need flexibility. I need to be able to change my dinner plans at the last second…where I think now what do I do with this meat? It is going to go to waste…I feel much more comfortable having (VSP) waiting for me.” San Antonio

“There are some days where I don’t know what I’m going to make or the night before I’m thinking what do I have in the freezer I can pull out for tomorrow? Even when I am planning, there are times that things change and it messes up your plan. So if I had it on hand I know it would be there.” Boston

Source: In-Store In-Depth Interviews On-Pack Nutrition Claims September 2017
SUMMARY & OPPORTUNITIES
SUMMARY
IN-STORE & IN-HOME

SHOPPING
• The meal is often the trip driver, may not have a specific recipe in mind.
• Consumers are ok with the current state of the meat case, but could benefit from shopping aides. Less confident beef shoppers could benefit from tools to ease beef shopping barriers
  • Larger easier to read cut names
  • A color coding system to identify cuts i.e. sirloin steaks are always red
• Total cost, cut, and package size are the primary considerations when choosing the beef item for purchase.
  • Very close-in second consideration are industry labels (grade, brand, finishing, etc.), freshness/date codes, and marbling/fat

CONVENIENCE
• Consumers desire convenience in their often hectic lives. Items that have a shorter shelf life, such as overwrapped fresh beef, are seen as less convenient especially when plans change
• Vacuum Sealed Packaging offers flexibility in meal planning taking away the worry of beef going bad before use.
• Pre-portioned individual servings and fully trimmed steaks are viewed as more convenient.
• Pointing out length of time to cook encourages less confident cooks and reminds confident cooks of ease & convenience to get it to the table
SUMMARY
IN-STORE & IN-HOME

NUTRITION
• Calling out the grams of protein and calories per serving has a positive impact on beef’s health perceptions.
• “Lean” continues to have power with consumers to let them know that beef can be a healthy choice.
• Consumers are pleasantly surprised to learn the power that beef packs with high protein levels and lower calories per serving.
• “No preservatives” drives interest and elevates impression of quality and taste
• Information needs to fall into people’s laps; they are not researching it themselves

DIFFERENT PEOPLE – DIFFERENT NEEDS
• Beef confidence levels vary; some consumers need assistance with selecting and some with cooking beef
• Consumers want to have a good experience with beef, so easy tips to cook beef successfully are appreciated.
• Different eating styles and occasions warrant different types of beef packaging
  • Some prefer individual packaged pre-portioned servings, others prefer larger packages.
  • Some prefer to decide on the serving size themselves, some like the simplicity of a single serving
  • Some occasions are right for single servings, some require larger pack sizes
THANK YOU