SOLO OR SOCIAL: IMPACT ON PRODUCT COMPARISON EVALUATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

- Product test results from central location testing (CLT) are often challenged for their inability to predict real life behavior in the context of social and eating environments. However, product complexity, availability and project timing requirements often preclude the use of in home testing for product guidance research.
- This research investigated the impact of replicating an in-home social environment with friends or family members in a central location test facility for the comparative evaluation of two pizza products.
- King et al 2004 found a negative effect of social setting amongst strangers on pizza acceptance. Furthermore, King et al (2004) and King et al (2007) observed no effect on overall acceptability scores between a CLT and a restaurant CLT using forged social groups.

OBJECTIVES

- To compare the impact of two contextual factors, social context and the physical environment on consumer responses obtained from a controlled meal test (CMT) with groups of friends or family members versus a controlled central location test (CLT) in which the environment was tightly controlled and evaluations were conducted individually.

METHODOLOGY

- Consumers n=104 participated in a central location test (CLT) in a controlled environment for the evaluation of two pizzas A and B with product assessments conducted individually. A separate group of consumers n=103 comprising 27 groups of friends and family members were recruited to the same specifications and participated in a controlled meal test (CMT) for the evaluation of the same two pizzas. The physical environment in the CMT was modeled on a home use dining situation with product evaluations made individually and via group consensus with social interactions amongst the friends and family members in each group n=3/4 as they sat together in a dining room setting.
- Consumers in the CLT were shown a whole pizza at the start of the test and were given a slice of pizza to complete their evaluation. Consumers in the CMT were served a whole pizza at their table for portioning and consumption.
- For both test situations consumers self completed questions for overall acceptance and attribute liking (9 point hedonic), freshness (5 point rating) and product attribute rating (JAR) for the two pizzas followed by a preference response. In the CMT each consumer and the leader of each group completed a questionnaire individually. The groups then discussed their evaluations and the leader completed a consensus questionnaire on behalf of the group.



- The results were analysed for comparison across CLT individual responses, CMT individual responses, CMT leader responses and CMT group consensus responses

RESULTS

- Consumers in both the CLT and CMT tests showed a significant preference and liking for pizza A over pizza B. Overall liking scores for pizza B were lower amongst all CMT responses compared to CLT responses. Pooled attribute liking scores for all CMT responses were all consistently lower than CLT responses for pizza A and significantly lower for pizza B.
- Purchase intent scores for all CMT responses were lower than CLT responses for both pizza A and B

	CLT Individual responses		**CMT** Individual responses		**CMT** Leader responses		**CMT** Group consensus	
	A	**B**	**A**	**B**	**A**	**B**	**A**	**B**
Preference	61*	28	67*	34	70	19	66	30
Overall Opinion	7.4*	6.8	7.1*	6.2	7.4*	6.3	7.3*	6.1
Pooled Attribute liking (12)	7.1*	6.7	6.6*	6.1	6.9	6.4	6.7*	6.1
Purchase intent top box/top 2 boxes	33/72*	24/52	21/62*	11/42	22/67	7/48	22/59	4/41

*Significant difference between Product A and B

- Overall there were few differences for product attribute ratings between the CLT and CMT tests e.g. amount of pepperoni, but there were some exceptions.
- A disparity in freshness was observed amongst CMT respondents for the 2 pizzas which was not evident from the CLT respondents.
- In the CMT setting where consumers were exposed to the whole pizza for the duration of their testing there was more dissatisfaction with the size of both pizzas.
- There was also more dissatisfaction with insufficient cheese on pizza B for CMT respondents compared to CLT respondents. More CMT respondents rated pizza A too salty compared to CLT respondents.

	CLT Individual responses		**CMT** Individual responses		**CMT** Leader responses		**CMT** Group consensus	
	A	**B**	**A**	**B**	**A**	**B**	**A**	**B**
Freshness	3.7	3.6	3.5*	3.0	3.6*	3.0	3.6*	3.0
Size								
Just right %	84	64	33	25	37	22	26	22
Net effect %	-14	-34	-61	-73	-63	-70	-67	-78
Amount of cheese								
Just right %	75	57	80	44	85	44	89	37
Net effect %	-17	-39	-7	-52	-15	-56	-11	-63
Amount of Pepperoni								
Just right %	85	72	81	78	81	85	93	93
Net effect %	-6	+3	+4	+9	+4	0	+7	0
Overall saltiness								
Just right %	71	82	61	76	59	89	56	78
Net effect %	+19	+1	+35	+11	+41	+11	+44	+15

*Significant difference between Product A and B

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- Overall the results from the CLT and the CMT yielded the same overall conclusion for the performance of the two pizzas, in that product A was a better pizza than product B.
- Consumers were more accepting of the portion size of the pizza in the solo CLT context than the social setting of the CMT. Consumers in the CMT were more conservative in their purchase interest and more negative about the less liked product.
- The CMT presents an opportunity to gain additional insights on consumption such as saltiness perception and portion sizes that may not otherwise emerge from the results of a standard CLT.

REFERENCES

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