QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF HONEY AMONG CONSUMER SEGMENTS BY USING THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD

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SUMMARY

This research was designed to explore the attitudes and use of honey among the Romanian consumers, by using the focus group method. The study was made in February 2008, in Cluj Napoca and aided in identifying consumer opportunities for promoting interest in, and use of, honey. The objectives of the qualitative research were also to test different types of honey packs. The group consisted of 10 consumers and lasted three hours.

It is important to mention that the results of the study are based on the opinions of small numbers of consumers interviewed using a qualitative technique. The data are not statistically projectable and are used to generate hypotheses and to develop and understand possible issues and concerns regarding honey consumption. The participants to the focus group were recruited by using a screening questionnaire. The selection of the consumers was made by using the follows criteria: sex, age, education, residence. The discussion guides contained eight parts: introduction, warm up, use of honey, purchase behaviour for honey, attitudes toward honey, perceptions of honey, honey packs testing and wrap-up.

Honey is seen as a natural, 100% pure sweetener, sourcing from bees. There are some concerns about the purity of the imported honey. Honey’s use stems largely from family traditions learned as children, which create a strong foundation on which to build new uses as an adult. Honey is characterised as a complex food. Its favourite attributes are: the sweet taste and the good alternative to sugar (in food and beverage), the benefits for health, the energy booster, and the cosmetic and therapeutic uses. The only significant negative quality of the honey is its messiness. The tendency to crystallize not appears to limit its use.

Packaging is not an important purchase driver for the Romanian consumer. The classical glass jar remains the favourite type of package for the participants to the focus group. Consumers don’t trust the plastic jars or other types of containers.

We identified some patterns of consumption: the aged people consume honey especially for the therapeutically qualities of this product. For this segment, an important source for information about the uses of honey is represented by the Romanian magazine “Medicina naturista”. The young segment of consumers use honey because it’s behaviour learned as children.

REFERENCES