

Toxicity And Memory—Consumer Reactions To Foods From Japan, A Year Later

By Aurora Saulo¹, Nadejda Livshits² and Howard Moskowitz²,

Rule Developing Experimentation (RDE) is a systematic exploration of ideas that has not been used to link elements that drive people to buy foods with the emotions they feel when they buy those foods. RDE reveals clear, quantitative links between emotions and the person's criteria for making a purchase decision. RDE is particularly relevant here because it cannot be 'gamed' by the respondent, i.e., answered in a politically correct way.

Food Safety RDE was first employed by the authors to analyze food safety messaging. For this study, Food Safety RDE was used to link elements that drive decisions to buy food from Japan to emotions of people who buy the foods. This study was undertaken to understand differences in thinking, behavior, and feelings toward foods from Japan after the Fukushima disaster and to develop coherent messages and explore if over time these messages could reduce anxiety. Results indicate that emotional state changes purchase decision criteria. Using the messages has to be done in a structured way, taking into account the emotions that accompany the messages.

Instead of traditional surveys, Rule Developing Experimentation (RDE) was also used to create a six by six matrix of 36 messages, realizations of the different consumer response dimensions involved in consumer reactions to radioactivity in food. Additional demographic and self-profiling questions were asked to identify consumer mindsets. Results indicate that a year of outreach using truthful, science-based statements did not seem to alter people's behavior. In many cases, they became more nervous and suspicious.

¹ University of Hawaii at Manoa

² Moskowitz Jacobs, Inc., New York