Important information for the selection of workplace canteen meals: A consumer segmentation study

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INTRODUCTION
The provision of nutritional information has been associated with improved intakes and dietary profiles1-3, but in a workplace canteen, consumers typically have very little information on the foods they are eating4-6. Any provided information is also more likely to be used and valued, if consumers consider it to be relevant to them7-8.

This study aimed to characterize consumers based on the information of importance to them when selecting a meal from a workplace university canteen.

METHOD
An online questionnaire was created based on the outcomes of focus groups9-10, that identified eight factors of potential importance to meal selection in a workplace canteen on which information could be provided. These factors were 'value for money', 'naturalness', 'nutrition', 'origin', 'animal welfare', 'environmental impact', 'fair trade' and 'organic'.

452 individuals with access to a workplace university canteen, from Denmark (DK), France (FR), Greece (GR) and the UK, completed the questionnaire. Individuals were asked to choose the information of importance to them in meal selection in a canteen, using a best-worst scaling method. Important factors were identified per individual (as best-worst utility scores) and these data were analysed by latent class cluster analysis.

RESULTS
In general, and across countries, information on 'value for money', 'nutrition' and 'naturalness' was most important to consumers. Latent class cluster analysis was performed and a five cluster solution chosen as best fit (BIC=16990.6, error<0.1) (Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster name</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cluster description</th>
<th>Gender (%male/female)</th>
<th>Age (%&lt;30/30-40/40+)</th>
<th>Country (% UK, DK, FR, GR)</th>
<th>Employment (%full/part-time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value driven</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>High importance given to 'value for money', and to some extent to 'nutrition' and 'naturalness', but low importance given to environmental concerns</td>
<td>48/54</td>
<td>39/24/17/10</td>
<td>56/44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionalist</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>High importance given to 'value for money' and 'nutrition', and some consideration also given to more socially conscious factors</td>
<td>46/54</td>
<td>48/17/21/14</td>
<td>64/36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society responsible</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>High importance given to the factors involved in food production 'environmental impact', 'fair trade', 'organic' and 'animal welfare', low importance given to 'value for money' 'nutrition' and 'naturalness'</td>
<td>30/70</td>
<td>31/9/30/30</td>
<td>60/40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health conscious</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>High importance given to 'naturalness', 'organic' and 'nutrition', low importance given to 'value for money' and to more environmental and socially conscious factors</td>
<td>28/72</td>
<td>19/14/38/31</td>
<td>78/22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locavores</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>High importance given to 'provenance', and to some extent to 'environmental impact' and 'naturalness', low importance to 'nutrition'</td>
<td>32/68</td>
<td>11/30/8/51</td>
<td>45/55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION
These findings suggest different information to be more/less important to different consumers when selecting a workplace canteen meal. Provision of only the information important to an individual may result in increased use and value of that information, as previously demonstrated1-3.

EU-funded project FoodSMART aims to develop an interactive mobile phone application to provide this personally important information.

REFERENCES