FOOD ACCEPTABILITY

Edited by

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Preface

Food acceptability, as a scientific discipline, is the study of human food selection. In essence, this means the study of context dependent behaviours which occur when food and consumer interact, in particular circumstances and at a particular moment in time. All possible combinations of food, consumer, circumstance and moment, would yield an extensive catalogue of behaviours, but a few obvious examples might include; selection of retail outlet (corner shop, supermarket, etc.), selection of restaurant, cafe, pub, etc., purchase decision in retail outlet, menu selection in restaurant, selection of food for preparation in the home, decision not to consume food purchased (waste), acceptance/rejection at point of consumption, acceptance/rejection during consumption (plate waste), quantity consumed, frequency of consumption of a particular food, speed of consumption of a food, spontaneous verbal expressions of liking or disliking, spontaneous facial expressions indicating liking or disliking, to name but a few.

From the foregoing, it is readily apparent that food acceptability is a marriage, albeit an uncomfortable one, between food science and behavioural psychology. I describe the marriage as uncomfortable because these two disciplines are not, at first sight, very obvious partners; there are few food scientists who are expert in psychology and vice versa. Regrettably, there have been relatively few food professionals who have even recognised the need for input from behavioural psychology, perhaps due to incorrect interpretation of

food acceptability in terms of the physico-chemical properties of rather than as a behavioural phenomenon.

Thankfully, the situation is now changing. In the United Kin at least, government agencies and industry have declared intention to invest in food acceptability. Our obligation is to d the underlying sciences and the methods, which will allow accurately answer the necessarily practical questions posed dustry. Perhaps the most obvious of these might be phrased as fo What are the attributes that consumers perceive in a particula food product and in what ways will these combine to determine purchase decisions? To answer this question is a tall order, bu fall short of this, our theories and methods will be of little pr value to industry. The fact that so very few new produc ultimately successful in the market place is an indictment methods used and the answers supplied, so far. Clearly there is to be done!

As far back as the late 1940s, there was a lone but persistent v the UK, proclaiming the importance of fundamental psycho principles in the study of food acceptability and in the s evaluation of foods. That voice belonged to Roland Harper. It honour this pioneering food psychologist that the Univers Reading (Department of Food Science and Technology) a Society of Chemical Industry (Food Group—Sensory Panel) h International Symposium on Food Acceptability, from 14th t September, 1987, in Reading, UK. The speaker and delega constituted a veritable 'Who's Who' of the subject and this was a most fitting tribute to the enormous contribution made by over almost four decades .

The ensuing chapters are the proceedings of this symposiu include contributions from food scientists, psychologists, statis consumer scientists, nutritionists and social scientists, reflecti diversity and multidisciplinary nature of the subject; something Dr Harper has consistently emphasised. In the first section of th ('A Tribute to Roland Harper') Dr Derek Land gives an acc Harper's long and varied career (Chapter 1), and Profess Frijters reviews his work (Chapter 2). Chapter 3, by Dr Lawless, revisits odour description and odour classification; a t which Dr Harper found international acclaim. The remain chapters are dedicated exclusively to food acceptability. In s this, the reader is asked not to construe this as the definitive

food acceptability (in my opinion such a book could not and should not be written yet), but more as a snapshot in time, showing the state of the science in 1987.

Many people contributed to the success of this symposium. I greatly appreciate the efforts made by the speakers, poster presenters and delegates, who made the symposium such a stimulating, lively and happy event. Behind the scenes, many others made a tremendous contribution, particularly Nadya Antonaides, Harry Nursten, Barry Pierson and Tony Williams (all members of the Organising Committee), also Teresa Church, Neil Gains, Stephen Green, Fenneke Outen-Leeftink and Sharon Shurey. On behalf of the Organising Committee, I would also like to thank the following for assistance and support given in many and various ways: Academic Press, Agricultural and Food Research Council, Brooke Bond Oxo, Cadbury Schweppes, Dalgety, Elsevier Applied Science Publishers, Express Foods Group, Leatherhead Food Research Association, Mobile Sensory Testing Services, Nabisco, Reading Scientific Services, J. Sainsbury, Tate and Lyle, Tecator, Tesco Stores, United Biscuits and Masaaki Yoshida. Finally, on behalf of all who attended the symposium, I offer thanks to those involved in the Conference Office and St Patrick's Hall, University of Reading and the Conference Secretariat, Society of Chemical Industry.

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