

Label cues to influence honey purchases

To help the Australian honey industry better market and label honey for international sales, the CRC for Honey Bee Products investigated which honey jar label cues are important to export markets.

The label on a jar is an eye-link between the consumer and their evaluation of the honey inside the jar. Its effectiveness as a shopping aid depends on what the consumer is paying attention to on the label. CRC for Honey Bee Products researchers looked at which label cues are important, especially when culture is considered.

The globalisation of the honey bee product industry has led to an increasingly complex marketplace. Honey production used to be a community initiative, whereas honey is now sent worldwide. This has fueled debates about food safety, supply, promotion of sustainability, healthy eating and food security.

With honey production often taking place at a considerable distance from its consumption, the consumers often have little knowledge about the complexity of the production chain from the beehive to the honey jar on the shelf. With this uncertainty, there are perceived risks associated with honey purchases, especially as the opportunity to sample the honey in-store is rare.

When exporting honey, the label is an essential link between the shopper and the honey product within the jar. When a consumer picks up a jar of honey, time spent looking at the label and responding to the information are limiting factors. Depending on the consumer's awareness, not all cues on the label will be paid equal attention or processed similarly.

CRC researchers investigated whether there was a cultural difference in perception of label cues between Australian and Eastern consumers, represented by the Chinese culture.

Researchers tested the link between consumer attention to product nature, quality assurance and health-related label cues. They found that Eastern consumers paid greater attention to the product and assurance-related cues, such as place of origin, and health-related cues, such as bioactivity.



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marketing



profitability



quality
product



Pictorial cues expressed as either brand logos or geographical labels are regularly used on Australian honey labels. CRC researchers tested Chinese consumers' responses to these pictorial cues. Responses were assessed on their expected product experiences, their value perceptions and how these changed the consumer's willingness to pay a premium price for the honey.

An online survey undertaken in China showed that pictorial logos evoked a functional and economic value, as well as an emotional, social and novelty value to the honey product. This resulted in consumers' willingness to pay a higher price for the honey. A naturalist logo, rather than a cartoon-like animal logo with human characteristics, was more strongly identified with a higher-value product.

Researchers also found that 'country of origin' and 'region of origin' label cues are sought-after on exported Australian honey products.

These cues evoke favourable product value perceptions and enhance beliefs about product authenticity.

Ultimately this influenced consumers' purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium price for the honey.

Unexpectedly, 'region of origin' (e.g. 'Made in Western Australia') was a more salient cue than 'country of origin' (e.g. 'Made in Australia').

Research by the CRC also found that when a cultural group was able to interact directly with the honey product, the relationship between culture and attention towards label cues weakened. This highlights the importance of in-store tastings in export markets.



Country of origin (such as the above) and region of origin labels on honey jars are important in export markets



Honey jar labelling is an essential element of purchasing decisions