ACADEMIC POSTER

SAMPLE

Consumer Willingness to Pay for Plant-Based Foods in Australia

Postgraduate sample · Australian academic standard

Background

Plant-based foods, including meat and dairy alternatives, have moved from niche to mainstream in Australian retail, driven by health, environmental and animal-welfare motivations. Industry data and CSIRO analysis point to steady category growth, yet price remains a barrier, with alternatives often costing more than conventional products. Understanding how much consumers are genuinely willing to pay, and which segments will pay a premium, matters for producers, retailers and for policy interest in sustainable diets. Product labelling in this category is regulated by Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

Aim and Research Question

The study aimed to estimate Australian consumers' willingness to pay for plant-based meat alternatives and to identify the attitudes and demographics that predict a price premium. The research question asked how much extra, if anything, consumers will pay relative to conventional mince, and whether environmental concern, health orientation and age explain the differences.

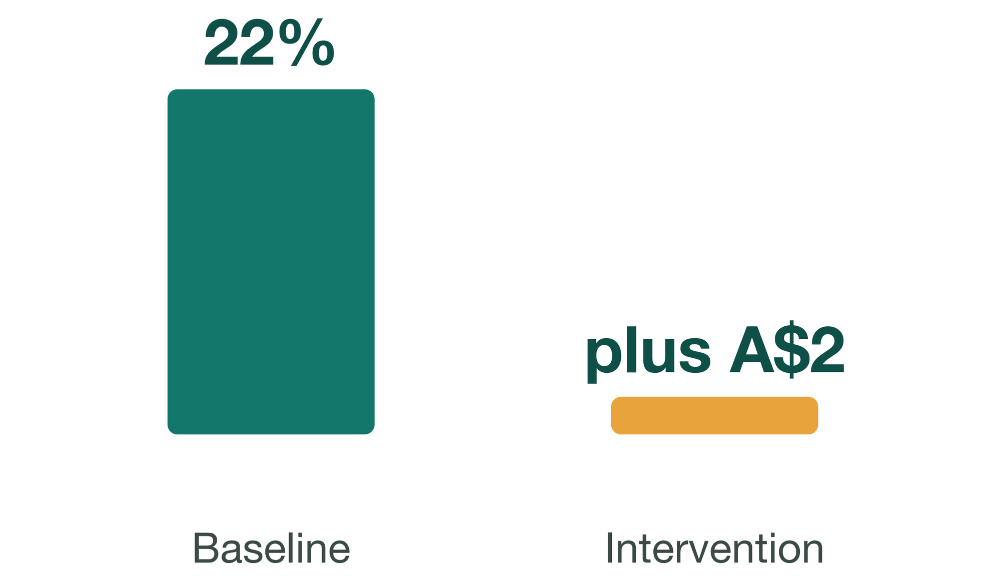
Methods

An online survey of 480 grocery buyers, quota-sampled to reflect the Australian adult population on age and gender using ABS benchmarks, was conducted.

- Willingness to pay was elicited through a contingent-valuation question against a reference price of A$8.00 per 500 grams of conventional beef mince.
- Attitudes to health, environment and taste were measured on five-point scales.
- Responses were analysed in R using descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares regression.
- The dependent variable was the stated price premium, with predictors including attitudes, age, income and prior purchase.

Results

On average, respondents accepted a modest premium, though a large minority would pay nothing extra.



Segment	Share of sample	Mean premium accepted
Enthusiasts	22%	plus A$2.40
Open but price-sensitive	46%	plus A$0.80
Reluctant	32%	plus A$0.00

- Mean willingness to pay was a premium of about 12% over the reference price.
- Environmental concern was the strongest predictor (beta = 0.31, $p < .001$), followed by younger age.
- Prior purchase and health orientation were positive but weaker, and income was not significant.

Discussion

The findings indicate a real but limited premium, concentrated in an environmentally motivated, younger segment, with a substantial reluctant group anchored to conventional prices. This is consistent with attitude-behaviour research showing that stated values do not always survive contact with the checkout. Contingent valuation is prone to hypothetical bias, so the true premium is probably lower than stated. The single reference product also limits generalisation to the wider plant-based category, which spans dairy, ready meals and snacks.

Conclusion

Australian consumers will pay a modest premium for plant-based meat alternatives, but willingness is uneven and driven mainly by environmental concern and younger age rather than income. Narrowing the price gap and targeting environmentally motivated segments appear more promising than broad premium pricing. Incentivised choice experiments would give a more reliable estimate than stated preference alone.

References

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