Antibiotics, Organics and Food Safety: A Ball of Confusion
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Opening Thoughts
- Meat case full of choices
- Proud of the options we offer
- Able to satisfy taste, nutrition, convenience, price, values

My Hypothesis
- Consumers take the big idea over details
- Media coverage 1) overemphasizes antibiotics, organics, hormones 2) underemphasizes food handling 3) and conveys facts inaccurately
- They fear the issues that get more coverage
- Issues tangled together in consumers’ minds,
- Emotion will always be part of the calculus
- Simple information that leverages science and emotion needed

Set the Stage

Confidence Has Remained Strong

Concern About Contamination, Handling Is Stable
Concern About Preservatives and Chemicals Growing
General Social Trend

- Big idea over the details
  - Can you say Twitter...
- ...but science is about the details

Scientific Literacy

![Chart showing data]

Chemophobia

“You’ll find that most chemophobic claims are aimed at our health, and this really shouldn’t come as a surprise. We’re an easy target for fraudulent health claims because our health is important to us. Nobody wants illness and death in their family, so we’re easily frightened by a claim that common chemicals can hurt or even kill us. This gives an unfair advantage to ‘team chemophobia’ – the general public is very impressionable when it comes to health claims. This means that ‘team chemistry’ has to be extra vigilant of fraudulent health claims.”

– Chad Jones, Scientific American
May 10, 2013

Pressures on Primary Shoppers

- Antibiotics: Attitudes and Knowledge

- Removed from Ag/farming
- Pressed for time, connecting via social media
- Less scientific knowledge
- Less food/cooking knowledge
- Wants best for her child, no Mulligans allowed
- Hit with alarming media coverage, study of week
Midan Marketing
Antibiotic Study 2012

• 72% of respondents said they were interested in purchasing antibiotic- and hormone-free meat.
• 55% of shoppers didn’t know if their store had meat that was raised with hormones or antibiotics.
• After hearing about antibiotics and growth hormones used in livestock, 44% of consumers surveyed didn’t change their behavior and 20% reported switching to a natural or organic pork or beef brand.

Midan Antibiotic Study, Cont’d.

• In the Midan study, 72% of respondents said they were interested in purchasing antibiotic- and hormone-free meat.
• 79% of respondents had heard of antibiotics’ use in meat production.
• 85% had heard about growth hormones.
• 41% concerned about negative effects of antibiotics and 42% about the effects of growth hormones.

Perhaps Most Important Finding

• According to Midan, 44% of customers couldn’t accurately define antibiotics or growth hormones!
• They fear what they do not understand...
• But it’s an emotional issue, so pure science won’t solve it.

Center for Food Integrity: Lead With Shared Values, Advance Facts

Educational Information

Antibiotics are used in livestock for the same reasons they are used in humans to treat illness and protect health. The result of responsible antibiotic use in farm animals is safe, wholesome meat.

Myth of “tetracyclines on your bun”

CFI Research

1 in 3 Consumers Expressed Positive Attitudes Toward Antibiotic Use in Animals After Educational Info

Resistance vs. Residues

• Confusion that when we talk about antibiotics, we mean residues
• Myth of “tetracyclines on your bun”
Organics

Organic Purchasing Is Price Sensitive

- While a minority are totally committed to organic food, many more buy it when they can afford it
- Gap between positive attitudes and purchasing

AMI/FMI Research

Uptick in natural/organic continues

- Natural and organic meat/poultry are making a post-recession comeback
  - Survey high of 26% have purchased natural or organic meat/poultry in the past 3 months
  - Pound sales have risen accordingly:
    - 2012 vs. 2011: +0.7%
    - Past 4 months: +9.5%
    - (vs. +2.4% for the total market)

Package callouts influence purchasing

- USDA beef grading system and callouts on “What’s not in it” resonate most with customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USDA Beef Grading</th>
<th>Total No/Not Too Much Influence</th>
<th>Total Somewhat and Major Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steroid free</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hormone free</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus beef</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain fed</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass fed</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free range</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gluten free</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drivers behind natural/organic

Reasons for Purchasing Natural or Organic Meat in 2011 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Long-Term Personal Health Effects</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free of Substances I Want to Avoid</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshness</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Taste</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Health and Treatment of the Animal</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Nutritional Value</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to Purchase Organics for My Family</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Appearance</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of an Environmental Impact</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Price remains barrier to entry

- While future purchases look promising among current buyers, price is a huge barrier among non-purchasers
  - 69% of shoppers say price prohibits them from buying natural/organic (The Hartman Group)
Penn And Teller BullSh#@

- Same banana, tomato, apple cut in half; one labeled organic and one non-organic
- “Organic banana is much creamier, much smoother, tastes more like a banana, like essence of banana”
- 71% of organic shoppers preferred non organic tomatoes
- 80% guessed wrong about organic apple
- 9 out of 10 outwitted on the banana gag

Consumer Handling: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Consumer Food Safety Practices

- Increasing food safety profile of meat and poultry means consumers may perceive that the problem is solved
- Translates to less motivation among consumers
- Basic practices like thermometer use have not changed much over time despite educational campaigns

AMI Polling Question May 2013

- What is the proper temperature for grilling hamburgers and turkey burgers?
- Almost a third (31%) confess they don’t know the ideal internal cooking temperatures for grilling hamburgers, and fewer than four in ten (39%) correctly named these temperatures.
- Unfortunately, far more women than men (39% vs. 22%) say they don’t know the correct answer to this question.

Bruhn Research 2010

- Videotaped 200 volunteers in their homes while they prepared burgers and salad, observing their methods of defrosting the meat, their refrigerators’ temperature, whether they put themselves at risk for cross-contamination and how they determined whether the meat was done.
- 90% washed their hands prior to preparation
- 31% dried their hands with a clean towel.
- Potential cross-contamination occurred in 74% of the households.
- Majority of burgers were cooked at or near the recommended 160 degrees F, 22 percent declared burger done when it was below 155 degrees F.
- Volunteers checked burger doneness with a thermometer in only 4 percent of homes
- Only 13% knew proper temperature for ground beef.
A Social Experiment...

On organic: do you buy organic meat and poultry and if so, why?

- **Steven**: I try to buy locally and humanely raised meat and poultry whenever possible. Whole Foods has made this a fairly easy thing to do. It does not have to be organic, but I do prefer the production thereof to have been antibiotic-free. I also think humanely raised food tastes better, especially pork and chicken.

- **Lisa**: Organic. And I typically purchase sulfate-free bacon and hot dogs, though it's hard to find those in organic. I prefer that the animals we eat to have been fed a natural diet.

- **Patrice**: Organic meat and dairy after seeing Food Inc.

- **Cori**: Yes, to me organic means the animals eat a healthier diet, have better living conditions, and are minimally processed.

Facebook Experiment: Meat Thermometer

- **Steven**: I cook intuitively (without a thermometer) and have never under- or overcooked anything or gotten sick from the food I prepared.

- **Evan**: I do own one, and I never use it for burgers. I always use it for whole chicken, turkey, and beef/lamb roasts.

Risk Perception

- **Ana**: Yes. I buy almost exclusively organic, especially meat and poultry. I do not want hormones or fillers or antibiotics in my food.

- Regarding thermometers for burgers, Ana says “never.”

Snopes.com Reveals On Line Food Rumors
David Ropeik on Risk

- Risks that are human-made are scarier than those which are natural.
- Risks we can’t detect with our own senses, or that we can’t understand, are scarier.
- Risks that lead to particular painful results - cancer - are scarier.
- Risks imposed on us - by industrial chemicals in our air and water and food – are scarier than risks we take voluntarily.
- Risks created by industries whose behaviors have taught us not to trust them, are scarier.

Role of Media

- Media and social media can turn volume up or down on issue at will
- Volume impacts actions, perceive risk

Case Study: Media Impact

- “Unfortunately, highly improbable events, extraordinary claims implying a conspiracy, and steadfast beliefs with little support beyond anecdote tend to given more coverage than sound information based upon empirically valid and peer reviewed research.”
- “Another typical tactic of the media is to present controversial topics as if there are two, equally relevant sides to the story,”
- Said another way: CDC vs. Hollywood celeb do not equal a balanced story just because they have opposing views...but that’s what we often get.

Journal of Food Protection 2010
Sara Fein, et. al.

- “Periods when in-home food handling practices improved (1993-1998 and 2006 through 2010) coincide with a high average increase in levels of food safety coverage by the media.
- Periods when food safety coverage was flat or declining coincide with flat or declining in-home food handling practices.”

According to Authors...

- Media coverage of a hazard may increase its perceived risk:
  - agenda setting (telling people what to think about)
  - providing salient information that increases top-of-mind awareness of the hazard

Conclusions

- Consumer concerns increasing around “added” substances
- Strong preferences exist for simple products perceived to be “free” of added substances
- Knowledge and attitudes about antibiotics and organics are intertwined
- Emotion plays major role in attitudes
- Lack of coverage of basic food safety has lessened motivation toward optimal handling
Thank you!

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