

# *A Study of Beyond Meat in Consumer Behavior*

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**Abstract:** The paper identified the consumer behavior of Beyond Meat by the concept of learning, analyzed the case from the perspective of consumer learning and behaviors, and applied two learning theories: behavioral learning theory and cognitive learning theory. The paper found that plant-based Meat can attract more consumers via its taste and shape. The paper also analyses the target market, brand vision, modelling, and culture by cognitive learning theory. However, brand vision cannot change consumers' meat preferences. Other factors can give positive reactions. Lastly, the paper gives two recommendations: changing the factors of CSR in vision and reducing the price.

## **1. Problem Identification**

### **1.1 Background**

Beyond Meat, which produces vegan meat alternatives, was established in 2009 in Los Angeles by Ethan Brown<sup>[13]</sup>. In 2013, Beyond Meat was famous in America at Whole Foods supermarkets<sup>[13]</sup>. Up to now, Beyond Meat has launched products to replace chicken, beef, and pork. The vegan meat alternative also brings protein to humans instead of animals-meat due to satisfy vegetarians' needs for meat-like taste.

### **1.2 Products**

Beyond Burger, Beyond Sausage, Beyond Beef Crumbles

### **1.3 Target market and segmentation market**

The target market is health-conscious people, and Beyond Meat is the largest consumer market in the younger generation. However, the case does not give other demographical markets and accurately predict the sales among younger consumers. The case has given the segmentation market by product, such as beef and chicken, and the psychological segmentation market is vegetarian. Brunton<sup>[6]</sup> even segmented the meat-eating market into meat eater, meat reducer, flexitarian, vegetarian and vegan according to the frequency of eating meat. The case also pointed out geographical segmentation, such as India, China, and the U.S. Because the plant meat was just created about twenty years, Beyond Meat is facing issues in sales and attracting more investors.

## 1.4 Competition

The competition of Beyond Meat is that it developed one of the more attractive vegan industries and produced meat alternatives. Their plant meat fits the target market: health-conscious people. However, the price of Beyond Meat is universally higher than real Meat, and the market for vegetarians is still tiny. The goal of Beyond Meat is to reduce the price lower than real Meat to satisfy consumers' needs. Meanwhile, Beyond Meat will improve the technology and innovations to produce more vegan alternatives.

## 1.5 Theories in case

The paper will analyze the case in line with the learning factor. Learning impacts consumer behavior in the purchase by providing the information and experience of the brand. Niosi <sup>[16]</sup> stated that learning could build a strong the connection between customer and brand by stimuli. Therefore, Beyond Meat used the consumer psychological behavior of learning to promote their brand and change meat preference. Consumers prefer vegan meat alternatives because the product leads consumers to give positive reactions: repeat purchases. Additionally, the company gives more practical benefits to consuming vegan meat alternatives than animal meat. This information is processed in consumers' brains as cues and recalls when they want to purchase meat. From Beyond Meat's products, target markets, segmentation market, and competition, the brand has built an engagement between buyers and sellers, and learning will be an excellent process to analyze the case. However, Beyond Meat also has some problems which have not been solved.

## 2. Analyse

The paper will discuss the consumers' behavior on Beyond Meat from learning and behavioral change, behavioral learning theory, and cognitive learning theory.

### 2.1 Behavioral learning theory

Behavioral learning theory is considered a stimulus-response connection. Additionally, the connection is the outcome of a response to external matters<sup>[16]</sup>. Similarly, consumers can respond through a learning period as long as the stimuli produce<sup>[16]</sup>. These consumers also realize that their behaviors of the connection will bring them rewards or punishments<sup>[16]</sup>. Their feedback also effectively affects their choices in the same situations in the future<sup>[16]</sup>. Moreover, consumers prefer to choose the product or brand that brings positive results rather than negative results<sup>[16]</sup>. The Beyond Meat case mentioned that the taste and texture of Beyond Meat are nearly the same as the real Meat from the reviewing of consumers. Beyond Meat also provides protein as Meat, and it also decreases the challenges of illnesses.

According to McEvoy, Temple & Woodside, reduced intaking meat can effectively decrease the risks of illnesses, such as chronic kidney cancers<sup>[12]</sup>. Additionally, soy protein supplementation plays a positive role in preventing illness <sup>[12]</sup>. Dukariya, Shah, Singh & Kumar also pointed out that soybean products have massive soy protein, positively preventing humans from various illnesses<sup>[7]</sup>. Furthermore, soy protein provides more strengths than animal protein, such as lowering blood cholesterol levels and more effectively supporting the human body's development<sup>[14]</sup>. Beyond Meat also applies soy protein for food sources. Therefore, the products of Beyond Meat are beneficial to consumers, especially the younger generation that is Beyond Meat's most significant target market. It is easy to analyze the consumers' behaviors via the above evidence.

Firstly, alternative meat looks and tastes like real animal meat and has nutritional ingredients. It

is a stimulus to attract consumers to enjoy. After a long-term experience, most consumers become healthier and reduce more illness because of the benefits of plant protein. At last, they will consider Beyond Meat as a good product and purchase repeat. To verify the result, Brunton published that two in three Australians have tried plant-based products, and the number is steadily increasing<sup>[6]</sup>. Australian consumers highlighted the strengths of these products because of their nutrition and taste<sup>[6]</sup>. Therefore, health becomes an adequate reward for attracting more consumers and makes consumers consider plant-based Meat to symbolize health.

On the contrary, Beyond Meat concluded that reducing actual meat consumption can improve life force since real Meat contains massive ingredients that harm the body significantly. According to conditioning learning, consumers cannot maintain purchasing when receiving negative rewards: illness. Therefore, the information guides consumers to consume less real meat. Instead, they prefer to concentrate on plate-based Meat.

## 2.2 Cognitive learning theory

Cognitive learning theory paper's definition of cognitive learning theory is that it is a function of mental processing, and the results of thinking can affect behaviors. In the early years, Mullen & Johnson considered cognition a process of knowing or thought, and cognition outcomes will impact human behaviors<sup>[15]</sup>. However, Batkoska & Koseska argued that cognitive learning is multiple mental performances of introducing all consumer mental actions in purchasing the products and services<sup>[3]</sup>. Cognitive learning lets consumers apply memory for current behavior and future use<sup>[3]</sup>. In other words, cognitive learning puts consumers' short-term memory into long-term memory by encoding, storing, and retrieving information.

Firstly, the paper will analyze the target market of Beyond Meat via cognitive learning theory. The company promoted meat's alternative to young consumers and considered young consumers the largest market. Because they have positive attitudes toward psychical health, additionally, young consumers would like to pay more attention to figures than other old ages. Lowes & Tiggemann reported that many young people have significantly concerned about body shape and are aware of dieting<sup>[9]</sup>. Indeed, young females around six have a strong desire for beautiful figures<sup>[10]</sup>. Beyond Meat has no saturated fats and provides them with enough protein. Therefore, it will be famous among young consumers. Furthermore, most young people stored in short-term memory with a healthy consciousness. When they meet the alternative meat in the supermarket, they can build a long-term memory of health after the consumption experience. After that, these consumers would like to repeat purchases for health. Although Åstrøm & Rise pointed out that it is hard for young people to eat healthily, few have nutritional and behavioral choices<sup>[2]</sup>. Beyond Meat launched the fast product, Beyond Burger, for their target market. Neither the target market nor products Beyond Meat can satisfy their needs.

Secondly, it is worth discussing Beyond Meat's vision in line with cognitive learning theory. Except for vegetarian diets, Beyond Meat pioneered a new idea: reducing the consumption of animal meat to protect the environment. In brief, its vision fits the concept of CSR to attract more consumers. However, Abdeen, Rajah & Gaur contradicted that only CSR's philanthropic, ethical, and legal aspects positively impact consumer behaviors, and other factors can not directly build a relationship with consumers<sup>[1]</sup>. Lee & Shin also added that social and local community contributions effectively influence consumers' awareness, nevertheless, the protection and contribution of the environment have no difference on the awareness of consumers<sup>[10]</sup>. Beyond Meat focused on environmental and animal protection. Thus, its brand vision cannot change consumers' minds about purchasing. The main reason is that environmental and animal protection cannot catch the eyes of consumers, stored in a system of memory, and then it cannot retrieve consumers' intentions. Boon et

al. stated that environmental concerns of brands have an irrelevant connection with consumers' purchase behaviors, and most consumers have no awareness of environmental protection<sup>[4]</sup>. For example, most consumers pay no attention to environmental problems in Malaysia despite authority involvement in waste management plans<sup>[4]</sup>. According to the cognitive learning theory, consumers' attention cannot focus on Beyond Meat. It is not easy to continue the mental process, ineffectually changing behaviors.

Thirdly, modelling influence is appropriate for analyzing Beyond Meat. Brown invited basketball players to taste their products in New York and presented advertisements to fans before the game. Beyond Meat wants to gain more attention from public influencers, namely, modelling influence. Modeling influence can indirectly bring more consumers. For example, when a person wants to purchase a pair of shoes in a store, he will recall the celebrity wearing the same shoes with a good figure on media, which quickly prompts him to purchase. Humans can evolve because humans can imitate a replicator<sup>[5]</sup>. Human brains also can solve problems and design for selective imitation<sup>[5]</sup>. In other words, humans are hard-wired to imitate, and then the attention will focus on imitated objects. Human brains can store information and change behaviors via imitation<sup>[5]</sup>. Similarly, when basketball players attract massive fans, their fans can easily imitate their behaviors. Beyond Meat's consumers can purchase the products which basketball players experience with high probability, especially their fans.

Finally, culture also effectively influences consumer behaviors. According to Gajjar, the influencing of culture includes religions, geographic regions, and racial groups<sup>[8]</sup>. Moreover, the religious factor is the most effective approach to measure the cultural influence on consumer behaviors in the market, and its influence is the most obvious<sup>[11]</sup>. Beyond Meat decided to expand the market into India and China to fit the need of vegetarians. India and China are influenced by Buddhist culture. Therefore, there are massive numbers of Buddhists consuming vegetarian diets. The chain of reaction fits cognitive learning theory. Influenced by Buddhist culture, these consumers are aware of vegetarianism and even store a long-term memory of vegetarianism. They prefer to purchase plant-based Meat. When Beyond Meat has segmented markets into India and China, the company will possibly gain more market share.

### 3. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, the paper will give two recommendations. One is that Beyond Meat should pay more attention to ethical and legal aspects of CSR. After all, these factors can attract more consumers' awareness. Only consumers who store the brand's information will likely purchase the products. Another is that Beyond Meat should improve technology for a low price. Because most consumers are used to eating meat, they have difficulty purchasing meat alternatives at a high price. Nowadays, producing alternative meats needs massive funds, particularly the spending on production technology. If Beyond Meat wants to change consumers' meat preferences, it must control the production cost of plant-based Meat. That will give consumers more chances to consume products.

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