

Consumer Behaviour and Experience When Purchasing Cage-Free Eggs in China

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Abstract : China is the world's largest egg producer, with more than 90% of production occurring in conventional cages. Cage-free housing systems offer the potential for improving hen welfare, but the growth of this system requires consumer demand, making it important to understand consumers' willingness to engage with cage-free eggs. Previous survey research indicates that the majority of Chinese consumers have a basic understanding of cage-free eggs and that some are willing to pay a price premium for these eggs. The aim of this research is to understand consumer behaviour, experience, and motivations when purchasing cage-free eggs in China. Purposive sampling will be used to select 20 participants from each of 2 groups: 1) consumers of cage-free eggs and 2) sales representatives who promote these eggs directly to consumers in supermarkets. This 4-month study will use methods of virtual ethnography to interact with participants repeatedly. Consumers will be asked to share their egg shopping, cooking, and eating experiences, and sales representatives will be asked to share their experiences promoting the eggs to consumers. Data collection will involve audio-recorded interviews, informal conversations (casual texts and calls), participant observation (video calling during shopping, cooking, and eating), and informant diaries (written reflections, photos, videos). All data (field notes, transcripts, diaries, photos, and videos) will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis. We expect that these will result in a nuanced understanding of consumer purchasing behaviour and motivation and will thus help identify strategies to promote higher animal welfare and cage-free egg products in China.

Keywords : animal welfare, cage-free eggs, China, consumer behaviour, ethnography

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