

# Methodologies for Studies on Consumer Food Choices

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ILSI SEA Regional Seminar on Drivers of Consumer Food Choices



## Take a Moment

- **What methods do you use to understand consumers and their food choices?**
  - Traditional vs new methods?
  - Triangulation?
- **Do you really not have enough data?**
  - Right data, data analysis, insights focused
- **What's not working for you?**
  - Doesn't account for the realities of consumers lives?
  - Myopic 'discipline only' view of the world?
- **Have you thought about your consumer food choice research over the next 5 years?**
  - Who, where, what, when, why..?
  - New methods
  - New technologies
  - Linked to clear consumer change strategy?

**Many questions and challenges**

Mike Reid. RMIT University.



## Next 25 Minutes

**My Lens:**

**Consumer research. Food Gatekeepers. Healthy eating and lifestyle. Social marketing. Product development.**

- Part 1: Consumer behaviour and methods
- Part 2: What we do?
- Part 3: Challenges?

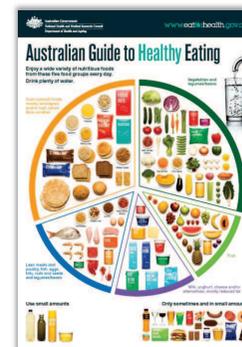
**“Eating, drinking and food choices are among the most frequent human behaviours. Although seemingly simple, they are complex behaviours that are determined by many factors and their interactions...” (Köster, 2009)**

Mike Reid. RMIT University.



## The Challenge: Our View vs. Their Reality

The healthy eating message often promoted is rational choice, nutrient or food based



vs

Life is messy, chaotic, contextual, and emotional

**We need methods [and research designs] that help us understand the daily dilemmas, tensions, and challenges consumers face – the lived experience - the complexity and context of family life that shapes food choices**

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## Köster's 5 Fallacies

### The rational food decision maker doesn't really exist

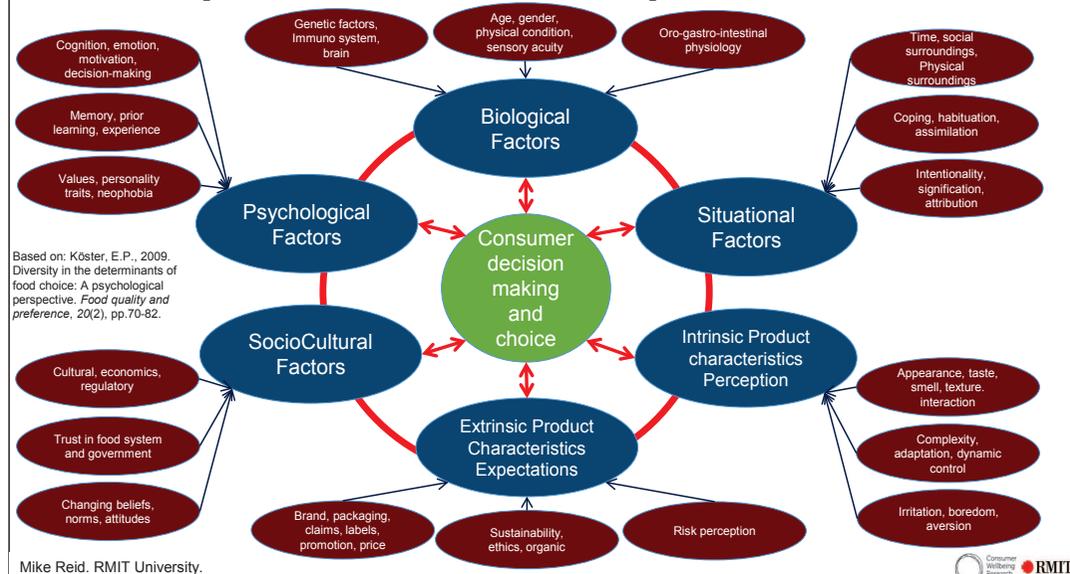
1. **Consumer uniformity fallacy** – different segments can have quite different behaviours...
2. **Consumer consistency fallacy** – food choice drivers change...lifestage, occasion, health goals, learning, context...
3. **Conscious choice fallacy** – people are not reasonable and rational – emotional, habitual, intuitive, influenced...
4. **Perceptual fallacy** – perception is beyond only sensory acts (smelling, seeing)...memory, mood
5. **Situational fallacy** – perception not just based on physical surroundings...people, occasion

Köster, Egon Peter. "The psychology of food choice: some often encountered fallacies." *Food Quality and Preference* 14, no. 5-6 (2003): 359-373.

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## Complex Interactions Impact Choices



## Australian Main Meal Choice

- Basic drivers are taste, convenience, cost, health and cooking ability
- Mums with kids are still main meal gatekeeper
- Men increasingly involved
- Main meal often decided on the day
- Quickly cook from scratch, adapt and improvise
- Flexible meal planning with a core repertoire
- Buy a range of ingredients for a range of mostly semi-planned meals
- Meals have a reason e.g. two for one roast, bolognaise for sharing
- Kids push parents to be a bit creative and healthy

Leech et al. 2015; Meat and Livestock Association 2013; Reid et al. 2015; Wang et al. 2013

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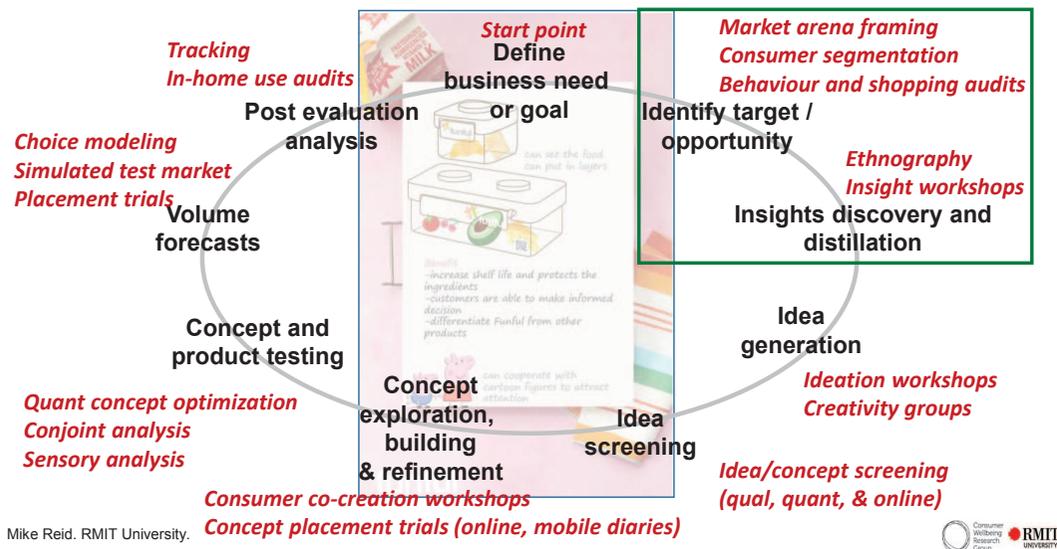
## Challenge: How to Get Below the Surface

- How do we get inside the minds and lives of those we are trying to influence and understand
  - Nuanced
  - Segmented
  - Real and not average population level
- Our choice of primary research method comes down to what we want to know and how well our consumers can provide the desired information and insight
  - What they think – attitudes, perceptions, opinions
  - What they do – behaviours and influences
- The older and traditional methods are not wrong...it's just that there are new ways of implementing them...they need to be reconsidered in the light of new technologies and understandings

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## Consumer Food Research Methods



## Modifying the Traditional and Adding the New

- Mobile surveys
- Online communities
- Social media analysis & analytics
- Text analytics
- Webcam based interviews
- Mobile qualitative
- Big data analytics
- Micro surveys
- Eye tracking
- Mobile ethnography
- Behavioural economic models
- Research gamification
- Prediction markets
- Facial analysis
- Crowd sourcing and co-creation
- Neuromarketing
- Virtual environments / VR

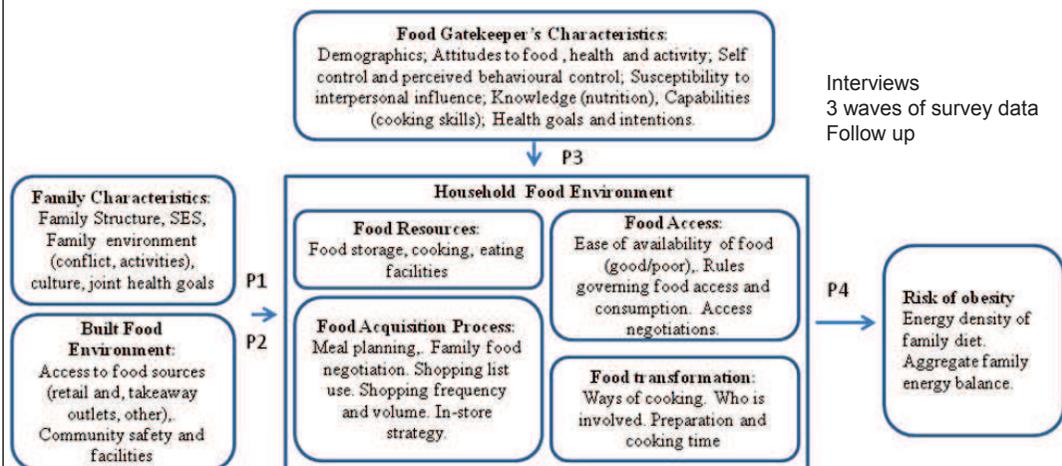
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## What Methods Do I/We Use?

- **GHE Segmentation e.g. The Eco-Moderates**
  - Values, motives, attributes, context, food behaviour, transformation and acquisition, capabilities
- **Life Rhythm Personas e.g. Jack the Meal Maker**
  - Profiling designed to uncover tensions that shape food choices and decisions
- **Consumer Decision Journey's e.g. Adding a new meal to repertoire**
  - End-to-end journeys of consumers food experiences
- **Online Communities e.g. Young adults, healthy eating, and social media**
  - Ethnographic analysis of the lived experience

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## Method: Gatekeeper Healthy Eating Framework



## Method: Online Communities

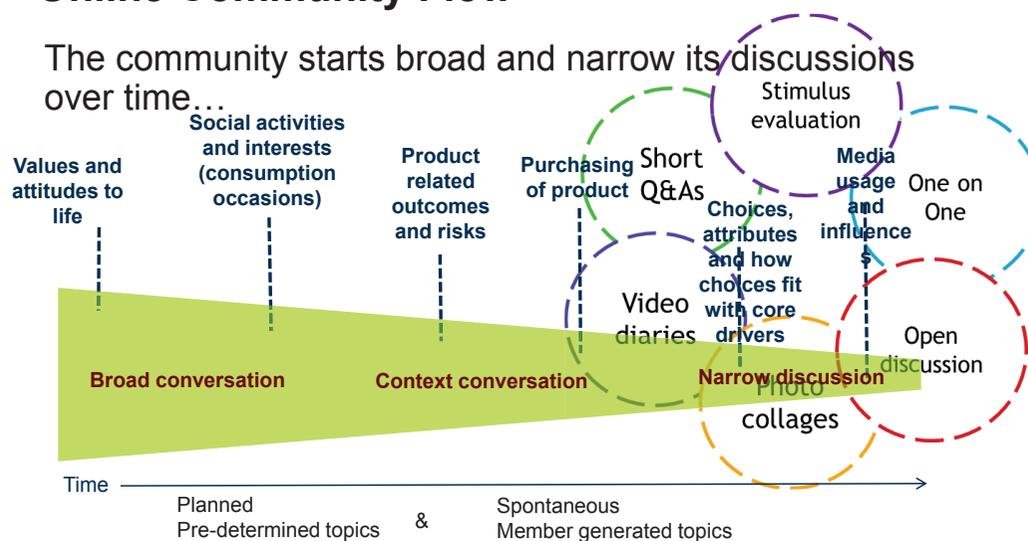
- **Dedicated, private online environment**
  - Participants are invited to share their views on a number of issues over a number of weeks.
- **Secure and accessible**
  - Giving participants the convenience of participation from when and where suits them.
- **Enables feedback from a larger number of people**
  - Compared with traditional qualitative research...without the constraints...no geographical or physical limitations
- **Discussions are both spontaneous and prompted**
  - Allows for greater context within the findings.
- **The iterative nature**
  - Gives greater flexibility and ability to dig deeper and go beyond the obvious

Our fieldhouse: <https://www.bastioncollective.com>  
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## Online Community Flow

The community starts broad and narrow its discussions over time...



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## They tend to feel busy with little time to cook and prepare food

Sometimes this is used to justify consumption of fast (and other unhealthy) foods

- **Some loved to cook** and could, **others seemed to never have learned** to cook and would benefit from mentoring in that area.
- Their **fast or snack food** of choice has become something of a **crutch** for them – **comfort, easy, quick, solves a problem...tasty too**
- Also a reflection of their **expectation of instant gratification**: they openly admit to being **too lazy to cook** and are used to an easy life otherwise.

*Easy, fast, and rewarding cooking tools, hints and strategies are an opportunity for engagement*

"At the moment I really don't have the energy to look for other solutions although I do think I should put in effort because its better for my health. when I do get fast food which is almost everyday, I try getting sumo salad or subway" (Female, 18-21, Low)

"I know I need to exercise more and I want to but I don't... I see my bed or couch and I can't move. I also know I need to eat healthier but fast food is so yum and convenient... these battles will be the death of me." (Female, 18-21, Low)

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## Five Types of Young Adults to Focus On

### Lifestyle mavens

I have a strong interest in health and wellbeing and use social media to follow active lifestyle personalities or get new recipe or exercise ideas.

### Aspirational healthy eaters

I have fairly developed interest in health and wellbeing and can't fail to notice advice or new ideas related to it on social media..

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## Five Types of Young Adults to Focus On

- Balanced all-rounders** Health and wellbeing is important and I try to be as balanced as possible but at this stage of my life I'm not seeking out more information about it
- Consciously unhealthy** I don't look out for health and wellbeing information. I know I eat too much fast food and/or sweets and I can sometimes feel guilty about that but what can I do?.
- Blissfully unconcerned** Health and wellbeing is not a big topic of interest in my social circles.

## An analysis of the conversations gives us a few clues in terms of the most impactful social media formats

- Humorous Memes** – ideal for tagging friends (and sharing obviously) – and in general any post that can be tagged
- Short news videos** e.g. BuzzFeed
- Life hacks** e.g. healthy eating just mix these three ingredients recipe videos or under 1 minute make-up video tutorials
- Listicles / clickbaits and quizzes:** the sillier the better e.g. which Disney princess I am
- Any content that links to popular culture**
- Fundraising / banding together for a cause**
- Any content that links to personal interest**
- Well-designed content**

### All have in common:

- Content based
- Story based e.g. transformational / before/after pictures, testimony
- Image based
- Made for sharing (incl. tagging or can be turned into an event)

## Method: Consumer Life Rhythm Personas

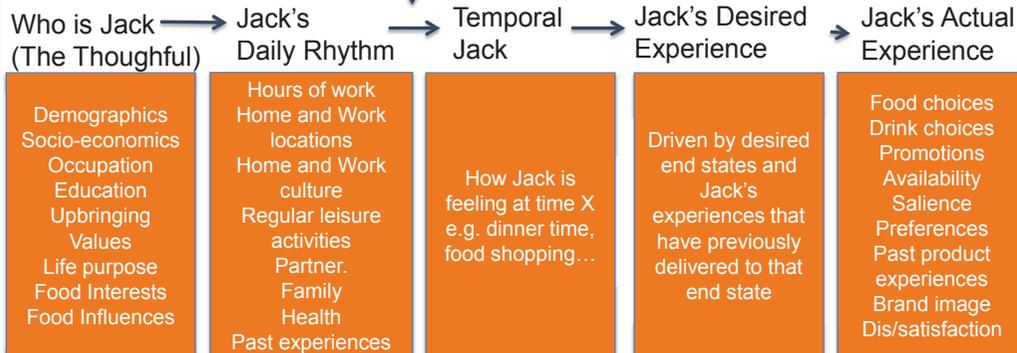
### Situational moderators

- Mood
- Emotional self
- Physical self
- Future concerns
- Stresses/ stressors
- Recent events

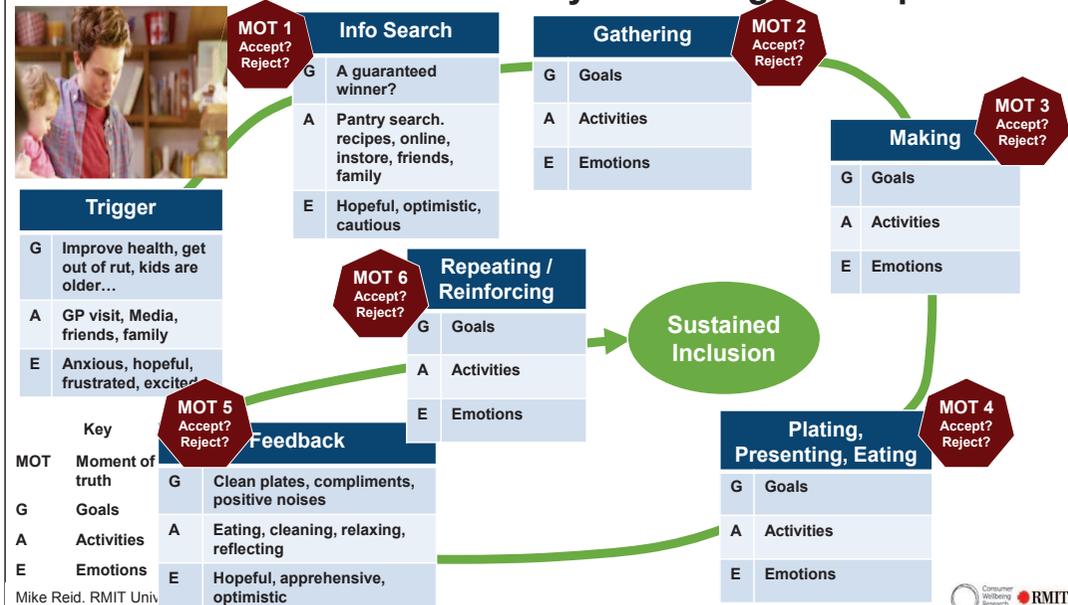
### Influencers and constraints

- Partner/spouse
- Family & pets
- Friends
- Work colleagues
- Passive / active
- Finances

Based on: Hickey, Liddle and Jenkinson 2005



## Method: Customer Meal Journey's - Adding to a Repertoire



## The Future: Challenges Abound!

- **Methods**
  - Balancing Old and New or Traditional and Innovative
  - Navigating competing techniques
  - The need for rigour balanced with expediency
  - Big data and Small data
- **Technologies and Tools**
  - Mobile devices
  - Social media
  - Big data
  - AR / VR

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## The Future: Challenges Abound!

- **Quality**
  - Right respondents and right quality
  - Right data with richness
  - Careful analysis and interpretation
  - 'Real' Insights
  - Respondent fatigue
  - Ethics and access
- **Expectations**
  - Budget are stretched
  - Understanding what's possible (and what's not)
  - Insights are too slow
  - Insight schizophrenia
  - Clear behaviour change goals needed

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## Summary

- Understanding consumer food choices will continue to challenge us
- We need to focus on behavioural insights and not just perceptions, opinions and attitudes
- We need to design research that is well focused and has clear goals and objectives
- The methods and methodologies we employ will need to balance both Traditional and Innovative tools
- We need to have the right skills in-house to understand how to get the best out of what we use and commission

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Thank you.

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