

531
E226
no 139

414
E226



CIRCULAR 139

JUNE 1961

DECISION MAKING in MEAT BUYING

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

E. V. Smith, Director

Auburn, Alabama

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	4
SCOPE AND METHOD	4
FACTORS AFFECTING MEAT-BUYING DECISIONS	5
FACTORS AFFECTING DECISIONS IN THE HOME	5
Desires and Preferences	5
Factors Related to Health	7
Limits of Budgets	8
Size of Family	10
Advertising	11
Family Background	12
Time and Equipment	14
FACTORS AFFECTING DECISIONS IN THE STORE	15
Appearance of Beef	15
Influence of Butcher	16
Advertising	16
Price Relationships	17
SUMMARY	18
LITERATURE CITED	20

DECISION MAKING in MEAT BUYING*

A. C. HUDSON, *Asst. Agricultural Economist*

M. J. DANNER, *Agricultural Economist*

DECISIONS IN MEAT selection are continually made by both housewives and suppliers. These decisions are important to the housewife because the cost of meat and meat products represents about 30 per cent of her total food bill.

A more complete understanding of housewives' meat-buying decisions would enable producers, meat packers, and meat retailers to better understand customers' desires. Meat, in addition to being a basic source of protein, frequently is the central food item in planning meals. By using various meats and different methods of preparation the housewife is able to stimulate family interest and make mealtime a daily highlight.

The housewife is the ultimate retail buyer of meat. Any insight into the *how's* and *why's* of her actions should provide useful guides for the meat industry in its efforts to maintain or increase meat sales. This information may help the retailer increase his sales.

The purpose of this report is to provide an understanding of major factors considered in and affecting the housewife's meat-buying decisions.

* The study was supported by funds provided by the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 and by State Research funds. It was conducted as Alabama Research Project 579. It is a contributing project to the Southern Regional Livestock Marketing Research Project SM-19, "Motivating Factors in Consumer Purchases of Beef."

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Few housewives buy food with any awareness that a meat selection problem exists. It is probable, however, that some have had experiences of dissatisfaction in buying, preparing, or eating meat. When problems become apparent and are of concern to housewives, they will seek ways to solve them. On such an occasion the housewife will use the same decision-making process as any manager. Steps in the process are: (1) recognition of the problem, (2) observation, (3) analysis, (4) decision, (5) action, and (6) acceptance of responsibility.

For most housewives, information gained by trial and error, recommendations of friends, traditions, advertising media, or a combination of these sources are used. The decision-making process may occur instantly or it may take time. At first the young housewife will probably be in a learning situation when buying meat; then, later will probably approach a position of greater sureness in meat purchases. That is, in light of her knowledge, experience, and resources, she can be more certain of getting the kind and quality of meat she desires. Many housewives may not face a real decision-making situation in meat buying if they buy on the basis of habit or custom.

SCOPE and METHOD

Data presented in this report were obtained from interviews with 529 Alabama housewives during March and April of 1959. The cities and number of households interviewed in each city were:

<i>Cities</i>	<i>Number of households interviewed</i>
Bessemer	79
Dothan	110
Florence	80
Gadsden	160
Selma	100
<i>Total</i>	529

These cities had populations ranging between 25,000 and 100,000. Block segments were selected at random. The first 10 occupied dwellings in each segment were used as a sample. Interviewers were allowed to substitute for a household if the need arose, but were required to maintain the same ratio of working wives that existed in the original segment.

A "disguised-direct" interview technique with a highly structured agree-disagree format was used. The technique is classified as disguised because the true purpose of the measurement was

never fully revealed to the respondents. It is direct because the response was based upon a self report by the homemaker. Straus (5) made the following comments about the non-threatening agree-disagree format:

"The underlying principle is to phrase questions or to structure the interview so that the respondents do not feel personally threatened by the need to express socially disapproved opinion.

"Evidently it is not necessary for the disguise to be complete and undetectable so long as it provides a rationalization acceptable to the respondent.

"Several mechanisms seem to account for the success of the agree-disagree format. First, true and false has a finality that many people prefer to avoid. Second, true and false may threaten the respondent by emphasizing that his or her knowledge is being tested. Third, in contrast to the testing connotation of the true-false form, the agree-disagree format is a subtle kind of compliment. It carries the connotation that the respondent's views are valuable and puts him on an equal plane with the expert. Fourth, agree-disagree saves face. It provides a convenient, acceptable rationalization that the respondent can use to cover his lack of knowledge of any question."

FACTORS AFFECTING MEAT-BUYING DECISIONS

Many elements considered in and affecting the housewife's meat-buying decisions were revealed through this study.

Decisions regarding meat purchases and preparation were made in two general situations. First, they were made in the home. Influences in the home were: desires and preferences, factors related to health, limits of budgets, size of family, advertising, time and equipment, and family background. Almost three-fifths of these housewives used a shopping list or guide and undoubtedly were influenced by these factors.

The second situation where housewives made meat-buying decisions was in the store. Influences there included: appearance of meat, influence of butcher, advertising, and price relationships. The importance of store influences was great. Seventy per cent of the housewives thought most people waited until they got to the store before making meat-buying decisions.

FACTORS AFFECTING DECISIONS in the HOME

Desires and Preferences

A housewife has the problem of knowing the amounts and kinds of meats to fulfill the nutritional requirements of her fam-

ily, in addition to the needs and desires of her family. In this study, no detailed analysis of taste was attempted.

Taste preference was cited by more housewives than any other reason for selecting a single meat for the next month. Sixty-two per cent of those who chose beef, 90 per cent of those who chose pork, and 66 per cent of those who selected chicken indicated taste preferences as one of their reasons, Table 1. Few people gave any other reason for selecting pork. The reason for persons with lower incomes choosing pork was possibly from habit or limits that lower incomes placed on meat choices, or both.

Most housewives bought different meats during the week to provide their families variety. About 90 per cent of the housewives served frying size chicken at least once a week, but less than 50 per cent served it more often. Only small percentages indicated that they served pork chops, steak, cold cuts, or canned meats more than once a week. Although preferences may have been strong for a single kind of meat, housewives apparently did not serve particular kinds or cuts with a great deal of frequency within the week.

Most high-income families preferred beef to chicken. Negro, and low-income white families preferred chicken to beef. This agrees with a Texas study that showed Negro families had greater preference for chicken than did white families (2). This is further supported by the fact that three-fifths of the white families spent a larger proportion of their food budget on beef. One-half of the Negro families spent a larger share of their food budget on chicken.

In selecting a meat they would eat for a month, about 80 per cent of the high-income families chose beef, Table 2. Preferences were also strong for beef among families with lower incomes.

TABLE 1. REASONS GIVEN BY HOUSEWIVES FOR SELECTING BEEF, PORK, OR CHICKEN AS THE KIND OF MEAT THEY WOULD EAT FOR A MONTH,¹ 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Reasons	Beef	Pork	Chicken	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Taste preference.....	62	90	66	68
Price.....	1	2	26	7
Many ways to serve.....	18	9	28	19
Ease of preparation.....	1	0	7	2
Many different cuts.....	7	5	3	6
Health.....	50	1	19	34
Other.....	1	1	1	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	308	93	128	529

¹ Housewives were permitted to give more than one reason.

TABLE 2. MEAT SELECTED TO EAT FOR A MONTH ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Type of meat	Under	\$3,000-	\$6,000	Total
	\$2,999	\$5,999	and above	
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Beef.....	49	57	83	58
Pork.....	21	19	5	18
Chicken.....	30	24	12	24
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

These households, however, had much stronger preferences for chicken and pork than did higher income families.

The 58 per cent of Alabama families that preferred beef was about the same as the 60 per cent in Houston but less than those in Phoenix and Denver (3,4). Eighteen per cent of the Alabama families expressed a preference for pork as compared with only 8 per cent in Houston.

Researchers in consumer beef preferences have sometimes assumed that preferences and practices in meat buying were not the same. Data from this study indicated that this may not be a valid assumption. High-income families expressed a preference for beef and reported buying beef more often. Low-income families who reported buying chicken more often also indicated that they preferred chicken over beef, Table 3.

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO BOUGHT BEEF, PORK, OR CHICKEN MOST OFTEN, ACCORDING TO SIZE OF INCOME, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Kind of meat	Under	\$3,000-	\$6,000	Total
	\$2,999	\$5,999	and above	
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Beef.....	33	59	82	53
Pork.....	19	16	9	16
Chicken.....	48	23	9	30
Same.....	0	2	0	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

Factors Related to Health

One-half of those housewives who selected beef and one-fifth of those who selected chicken mentioned factors related to health. The percentage of respondents giving factors related to health as the major reason for selecting meat are as follows:

<i>Kind of meat</i>	<i>Per cent of respondents</i>
Beef	50
Chicken	19
Pork	1

For most people getting enough to eat is not a problem. However, factors influencing health were considered important. When asked to select a meat they would choose to eat for a single month, one-third of the housewives interviewed gave reasons related to health and nutrition as the basis for their selection.

In one comparison, one-fourth of the low-income housewives and less than 5 per cent of the high-income housewives considered fried meats less fattening than broiled meats. Negro families had a greater preference for meat that was suited to frying.

Families with low incomes and little or no formal education preferred chicken as a "hot weather" meat. Higher income and more educated families considered beef as the best meat to serve in hot weather. The preference of low-income families for chicken extended the year-round. Almost all housewives agreed that pork should be thoroughly cooked and only 3 per cent considered it the best meat to serve in hot weather.

Two-thirds of the Negro housewives thought young children in a family would prompt such families to serve beef more often. Meat tenderizers, a product that could be of most use to middle and low-income families, were not well accepted by the Negro and low-income groups. One-fifth of all housewives indicated a complete lack of knowledge concerning meat tenderizers. The lack of interest in tenderizers may be explained in part by the fact that low-income groups served chicken more often than beef.

Limits of Budgets

Each family spent a definite part of its total income for food. This section recognizes three income groups based on amount of disposable income, or income that is available for use.¹ The groups are those families whose incomes (1) provide an amount to cover basic food necessities only; (2) provide basic necessities plus a little more; and (3) provide an amount that allows them to purchase almost any food they desire.

¹ An important point to remember in analyzing this and other sections is that almost all of the respondents with family incomes of more than \$4,000 were white. About one-half of those with incomes below \$4,000 were white. The median income for white families was \$4,000 to \$5,000 as compared with \$2,000 to \$3,000 for Negro families.

TABLE 4. BEEF CUTS MOST FREQUENTLY SERVED, ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Type of cut	Under \$2,999	\$3,000- \$5,999	\$6,000 and above	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Roast.....	12	23	28	20
Steak.....	22	38	59	35
Hamburger.....	52	32	12	36
Other.....	14	4	1	8
Same.....	0	3	0	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	208	228	93	529

The middle-income group made up the largest part of the sample. This group is the most important to processors and retailers. Households in this group have the greatest conflict between desires and ability to satisfy these desires. They need to make rational choices in their purchase and consumption of food.

The use of different kinds of meats varied with income level. Chicken was served most frequently by more than 50 per cent of the low-income families. More than 80 per cent of the high-income families served beef more often. About three-fifths of the middle income group served beef more often. The total sample showed 53 per cent of the families spent more for beef, 30 per cent for chicken, 16 per cent for pork, and 1 per cent divided their expenditures about equally between the three.

The cut of beef served more often also varied by income level, Table 4. More than one-half of the low-income households served hamburger more often. For the middle-income group, about one-third served hamburger more frequently. Approximately three-fifths of the high-income families, but only one-third of the low-income families, served steak more often. Roast was served more often by one-fourth of the high-income families but only one-tenth of these households served hamburger more frequently.

Family income and the cut of beef steak served more often were closely associated. Round and cubed steak were served more often by two-thirds of the lower income families, Table 5. Two-fifths to one-half of the middle-income families served T-bone or sirloin steak more often. T-bone or sirloin steak was served more often by more than two-thirds of the high-income families.

Almost one-half of the low and middle-income families who bought roasts selected chuck roast more often. In the high-income group, two-fifths of those who purchased roasts more frequently bought a rump roast and only one out of four bought chuck roast more frequently.

TABLE 5. STEAK CUTS SERVED MOST OFTEN, ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Cut of beef steak	Under	\$3,000-	\$6,000	Total
	\$2,999	\$5,999	and above	
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Round.....	43	34	8	33
Cubed.....	24	20	15	20
Sirloin.....	11	18	38	19
T-bone.....	12	23	25	19
Other.....	3	5	14	6
Don't buy.....	7	0	0	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

Size of Family

The effect of family size on meat-buying decisions was important. In large families, the principal wage earners were predominately skilled and semi-skilled workers, Table 6. Also, in large families more housewives were employed outside the home than in smaller families.

More of the large families, with five or more members, considered price as the major factor in meat-buying decisions. Sixty-five per cent of the one-member households, compared to 87 per cent of those with seven or more members also considered price as the major factor in meat-buying decisions, Table 7.

Regarding the kind of meat purchased, large families bought hamburger more often than did small families. When they did buy steak, large families bought round or cubed steak. As size of family increased, purchases of chicken within the week increased.

Large families preferred larger roasts. They bought cold cuts

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGE OF TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT, ACCORDING TO SIZE OF FAMILY, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Type of employment	Number in family					Total
	1	2	3-4	5-6	Over 6	
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Professional and executive.....	0	14	11	9	3	10
White collar.....	0	5	16	15	0	10
Skilled & semi-skilled.....	0	22	45	53	68	36
Unskilled.....	0	8	6	6	11	6
Unemployed.....	0	24	8	5	9	12
Part-time.....	0	1	0	1	0	¹
Other.....	0	1	0	0	0	¹
No male head.....	100	25	14	11	9	25
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	54	161	199	80	35	529

¹ Less than .05 per cent.

TABLE 7. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS CONSIDERING PRICE THE MAJOR FACTOR IN MEAT-BUYING DECISIONS, ACCORDING TO SIZE OF FAMILY, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Major factor	Number in family					Total
	1	2	3-4	5-6	Over 6	
	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Yes.....	65	77	81	86	88	79
No.....	35	23	19	13	9	20
Don't know.....	0	0	0	1	3	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	54	161	199	80	35	529

and canned meats more than once a week, and considered chicken as the best "hot weather" meat.

A greater proportion of housewives with large families, compared with small families, said that T-bone steaks should be fried. This reaction resulted from infrequency of serving T-bone steak and the fact that steak was usually fried. More housewives with large families prepared meats similarly to the way their mothers did. Sauces, such as ketchup and Worcestershire, were used on meats more by large families.

Advertising

The influence of advertising in connection with the housewife's decision was difficult to appraise. It was generally conceded that advertising does exert an influence on decisions housewives make. For this report, it was assumed that if a housewife is exposed to any given medium she is affected by it. In the more practical situation, some rating is given each program, magazine, or paper. The importance of reaching a vast number of viewers, readers, or listeners is recognized by the fact that various media establish their rates on the basis of circulation or size of audience.

Most housewives had either television or radio, or both, Table 8. About the only households not exposed to radio and television advertising were likely to be found in the older, low-income, and Negro family groups. Fewer Negro than white housewives read

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH RADIO AND TELEVISION, ACCORDING TO RACE, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

	White	Negro	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Radio, only.....	9	32	16
Television, only.....	3	6	4
Radio and television.....	85	51	75
None.....	3	11	5
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS....	371	158	529

TABLE 9. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS READING NEWSPAPERS, ACCORDING TO SIZE OF INCOME, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Type of newspaper	Under \$2,999	\$3,000- \$5,999	\$6,000 and above	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
None.....	49	14	3	24
Daily.....	49	79	65	66
Weekly.....	0	0	1	1
Daily and weekly.....	2	7	31	9
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

newspapers, Table 9. Newspaper advertising did not reach a low-income group, principally Negroes. Fewer of the older, Negro, and low-income housewives read magazines, Table 10. Thus, magazine advertising failed to reach respondents that were mostly Negro, above 60 years of age, and in the lower income groups. Apparently the only kinds of advertising that these people were exposed to were handbills, or in-store signs.

TABLE 10. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEWIVES WHO READ MAGAZINES CONTAINING FOOD ADVERTISING, ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Number of magazines read	Under 30	30-49	50-69	70 and over	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
None.....	43	39	46	65	46
1 or 2.....	51	48	44	28	44
3 or more.....	6	13	10	7	10
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	70	195	204	60	529

The reasons given for selecting a particular kind of meat can possibly furnish the basis for the direction of a firm's advertising program. Taste preference was the most frequently given reason for selecting meats and about the only one other than price for buying pork. The versatility of beef and chicken was also an important reason. In addition, one-half those selecting beef and one-fifth of those selecting chicken did so on the basis of factors related to health.

Family Background

Family background, especially that of the housewife, greatly influenced her meat-buying decisions. If she were reared in the South or West, she would seldom purchase lamb, a meat highly acceptable to people from many other sections of the country. Higher incomes and higher levels of education influenced the housewife's decision to buy more meat, higher quality meats, and

TABLE 11. KIND OF STEAKS BOUGHT BY RESPONDENTS, ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Kinds of steak	Grade school	High school	College	No male head	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Did not buy.....	4	0	0	7	3
Round.....	45	34	15	29	33
Sirloin.....	15	17	39	13	19
Chuck.....	1	1	0	0	1
T-bone.....	11	26	18	20	19
Rib.....	1	3	2	3	2
Cubed.....	23	17	13	27	20
Other.....	0	2	13	1	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	145	168	82	134	529

more expensive cuts. A person's religious background, important in meat-buying decisions in many areas, was not a factor in this study. Age of the housewife also influenced her meat purchases. The influence of race was quite important.

The kind of steak purchased in households of different education levels is noted in Table 11. In families where the male household head had attended only grade school, about two-thirds bought round or cubed steak, a type of meat that is usually fried. In the group headed by men who had attended college, 57 per cent bought the more expensive sirloin, and T-bone steaks. Four per cent of the group that attended only grade school bought special ground beef whereas 40 per cent of those who completed college bought this product.

Custom or tradition was more important to older housewives in meat buying. For example, a higher percentage of younger housewives than older ones preferred chicken already cut for cooking, Table 12. Eighty per cent of the younger housewives bought all meat for the week during one shopping trip. Less than 50 per cent of the older housewives did this.

Another element in the housewife's background that affected decisions was her experience in meat selection and preparation.

TABLE 12. PER CENT OF HOUSEWIVES WHO PREFERRED CHICKEN CUT UP, ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Preferences	Under 30	30-49	50-69	70 and over	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Yes.....	77	65	59	37	61
No.....	23	35	41	63	39
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	70	195	204	60	529

Age, formal education, amount of money available to spend for meat, and kinds and cuts of meat usually purchased were considerations in this question. Less than one-fifth of the housewives reported difficulty in selecting meat in the store. Their ability to distinguish between roasts was questionable.

Three-fourths of the homemakers interviewed thought that housewives with long experience spent more time in preparing meats. About three-fourths of the housewives agreed that they prepared meats similar to the way their mothers did. Three-fourths of the housewives thought younger married couples ate more fried meats than older married couples. Experience provides a housewife with knowledge of buying and selecting meats, her family desires, and what her budget will provide.

Time and Equipment

Time available for meat preparation will depend partly on the housewife's outside activities, but more critically on whether she is gainfully employed. The type of equipment was influential primarily in connection with meat storage. Three-fourths of the housewives interviewed had some type of freezer space available in the home.

Housewives gainfully employed outside the home made up 35 per cent of those interviewed in the five cities. Forty-one per cent of the Negro housewives worked outside the home and 31 per cent of the white housewives. Housewives in income groups of less than \$3,000 were mostly employed on a part-time basis. Housewives in the middle income group (\$3,000 to \$6,000) were employed full-time in skilled and semi-skilled capacities. Women in the higher income groups (\$6,000 and over) were hired as clerks, bookkeepers, and similar capacities, Table 13.

TABLE 13. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEWIVES GAINFULLY EMPLOYED, ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Type of employment	Under \$2,999	\$3,000- \$5,999	\$6,000 and above	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Professional and executive.....	0	1	6	1
White collar.....	1	7	22	7
Skilled and semi-skilled.....	6	15	6	10
Unskilled.....	7	1	0	3
Housewife.....	63	66	59	64
Unemployed.....	6	2	3	4
Part-time.....	16	5	2	9
Other.....	1	2	0	1
No female head.....	0	1	2	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

TABLE 14. PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPATION IN OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES, ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Participation	Under	\$3,000-	\$6,000	Total
	\$2,999	\$5,999	and above	
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
None.....	72	48	19	52
All adults.....	5	6	13	7
All children.....	2	3	0	2
All family.....	21	43	68	39
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS.....	208	228	93	529

An additional factor that limited the housewife's time was participation in social and civic activities outside the home. As incomes increased these kinds of activities increased. About one-fourth of the low-income housewives participated in outside activities other than church. Of those in the middle-income group, about one-half of the housewives engaged in such activities. More than three-fourths of the housewives in the highest income groups participated in organizational activities, Table 14.

The increasing volume of sales of pre-cooked, frozen, and prepared foods resulted from housewives' interest in quick and easy preparation. Notably, more of the higher income housewives found frozen meats acceptable. Another indication of interest in ease of preparation was that about one-half of the housewives chose meats that were normally fried.

FACTORS AFFECTING DECISIONS in the STORE

When the housewife enters the store, a new set of factors begins to influence her decision. She is then affected by the appearance of the meat in the display case, the butcher or counter personnel, advertising, and the relative prices of various kinds and cuts of meat.

Appearance of Beef

When the housewife reaches the store and has decided on a certain kind of meat she wants, she must then consider the individual cuts on display. Color, minimum fatness, and freshness of

<i>Characteristics preferred</i>	<i>Percentage of respondents</i>
Color of lean	65
Minimum fat	55
Freshness	46
Minimum bone	14
Marbling	9
Size	6
Other	2

beef were the most important physical appearance features that influenced housewives' beef selection decisions. The following list of beef characteristics, in order of importance, were those that housewives looked for in selecting beef:

Most housewives looked for some combination of a minimum amount of fat and bone and considered beef of a pinkish red color to be best. Color to most housewives was an indication of freshness. Similar results have been reported in Arizona, Colorado, and Texas (3,4,1).

Although most housewives ranked themselves fairly high in ability to select meat, more than one-half apparently were not familiar with meat grades, and almost no one relied on grades in choosing meat. Another apparent inconsistency in ability to select meat was indicated by 61 per cent of the housewives who said they could not distinguish a rump roast from a chuck roast. However, results indicated that individual purchases of roasts were consistent as to kind bought. Probably the housewife had little knowledge about other types of roast. Also, it may have been that housewives recognized roasts by sight or appearance if not by name. It was evident that custom or habit played a big role in meat selection.

Influence of Butcher

Even with self-service meat counters, the courteous butcher who willingly provides extra assistance to his customers has great influence. More than one-third of the housewives interviewed said they needed the butcher's help in selecting meat. The butcher's attitude and the amount of assistance given can possibly increase or decrease the sale of meats.

The butcher's influence on the housewife is further exerted through the kinds of meats available in the display case. If lamb were not available, the housewife who wished to serve lamb would be forced to select another meat. Moreover, very few stores in the sample cities handled more than one grade of meat, thus forcing a selection within the grade. Very few housewives went to a special store to purchase meats. In this study 93 per cent of the housewives bought meats at the same store where they purchased other groceries. In many cases, the housewife was attracted to a store by the quality of meat it handled.

Advertising

Placards and signs used to call housewives' attention to various meat items and their relative prices were an effective means of

influencing the housewife. Seventy per cent of the respondents made meat-buying decisions in the store. Thus, they were exposed to advertising within the store before decisions were made. For the group not exposed to radio, television, newspapers, or magazines advertising within the store was the retailers only method of calling attention to his products.

Price Relationships

Alabama housewives were price conscious. Eighty per cent of those interviewed said that price was the major factor in meat-buying decisions, Table 15. Although all household respondents were strongly influenced by price, respondents in lower income groups and larger families were much more price conscious because of food budget limits.

TABLE 15. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEWIVES CONSIDERING PRICE AS THE MAJOR FACTORS IN MEAT-BUYING DECISIONS, ACCORDING TO RACE, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Price as major factor	White	Negro	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Yes.....	74	94	80
No.....	26	6	20
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	371	158	529

Families who said they bought primarily on the basis of total package price were either Negro, young, less educated, lower income, or families that spent relatively smaller amounts for food. The effect of price is difficult to appraise for this group. Apparently, families operated on strict budget limits for a given time.

Price affected the frequency that chicken was served. Almost three-fifths of all families reported serving chicken more often than any other meat. Price was the reason given by 85 per cent

TABLE 16. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS GIVING REASONS FOR SERVING CHICKEN MORE OFTEN THAN OTHER MEATS, ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS¹, 529 HOUSEHOLDS IN FIVE ALABAMA CITIES, 1959

Reasons	Under \$2,999	\$3,000- \$5,999	\$6,000 and above	Total
	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Cheaper.....	90	83	67	85
Prepare many ways.....	9	7	15	9
Ease of preparation.....	5	10	22	9
Preference.....	17	18	15	17
Other.....	4	3	0	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	208	228	93	529

¹ Housewives were permitted to give more than one answer.

of these families for this choice. As income level increased a smaller proportion of the families cited price as a reason for serving chicken frequently. Ninety per cent in the low-income group gave price as the reason, 83 per cent in the middle-income group, and 67 per cent in the high income group, Table 16.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the major factors considered in and affecting the housewife's meat-buying decisions. A "disguised-direct" interview technique was used. This non-threatening format was successful in keeping the housewives from feeling the need to give socially desired answers.

The results obtained by using the "agree-disagree" format were in substantial agreement with those obtained in other states by use of other interview techniques.

Although most housewives apparently buy their meat on the basis of habit, problems in meat selection are likely to occur. Such problems may concern fitting wants to available funds, number of persons in the family, dietary requirements, or available time and equipment. When such a problem becomes apparent and is of importance, the housewife will use the decision-making process to solve it.

Meat-buying decisions are made in two situations. The first is in the home where the housewife is influenced by such factors as taste preference, limits of budgets, time and equipment, advertising, family background, factors related to health, and size of family. The second group influences the housewife after she enters the store which includes price relationships, physical appearance of the meat, advertising, and the butcher's influence.

This report is primarily for two groups, housewives and meat suppliers. If housewives guide their action according to factors mentioned in this report, they can perhaps become more efficient in selecting and preparing meats. Meat suppliers can stay in business only as long as they provide products and services desired by the housewife. The factors mentioned in this report should be useful to the retailer in evaluating his clientele.

Each of the factors discussed in this study may be of prime importance in any given meat-buying situation. However, some factors generally exerted a stronger influence than others. The following factors are given in order of importance:

1. The most frequently mentioned reason for selecting a single meat to eat for a month was taste preference. This was true for beef, pork, and chicken. Despite a strong preference for one meat, most housewives reported that they served different meats during the week to give variety in the diet.

2. Limits of budgets and price relationships affected the housewife in somewhat the same way. The former was the allocation of a certain portion of the food budget for meat and the latter the allocation of the meat budget between the various kinds and cuts of meat. Eighty per cent of the housewives interviewed said that price was the major factor in buying meat.

3. With more than one-third of the housewives gainfully employed outside the home and more than two-fifths engaged in organizational activities, time for food and meat selection and preparation was limited. Because of limited time and equipment, housewives were turning to quick and easy methods of preparation for meats and other foods. Many housewives were frying their meats and turning to frozen and prepared meals.

4. The most important physical appearance features of meat were color, minimum fat, and freshness. Pinkish red beef was considered the best color by housewives. Grade was not a significant factor in housewives' meat-buying decisions.

5. The influence of advertising was difficult to appraise, but housewives were aware of the advertising directed at them. Ninety-five per cent of the housewives heard radio or television advertisements or both. Seventy-five per cent read daily papers and 55 per cent read magazines containing food advertisements.

6. Such factors as area reared, religion, race, education, income, and age were part of the family background that affected the housewife's meat-buying decision. This and other studies have shown that Negro families had a greater preference for chicken than white families. Also, this study revealed a greater preference for pork in Alabama than that reported by Arizona in another study (3).

7. Factors related to health in meat selection and preparation were a matter of choice between alternatives for most families. One-half of those that selected beef as the single meat they would eat for a month mentioned factors related to health. One-fifth of those that selected chicken also mentioned this reason.

8. The importance of the butcher's influence has diminished somewhat since the introduction of precut and wrapped meats.

However, more than one-third of the housewives still needed his help. The kinds of meat available in the display case are influenced by the butcher.

9. The effect of family size on meat-buying decisions was important. Large families with five or more members considered price as the major factor in meat buying. Large families bought hamburger more often than did small families. More housewives of large families than those of small families thought T-bone steak should be fried.

LITERATURE CITED

- (1) BRANSON, R. E. The Consumer Market for Beef. Texas Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 856. April 1957.
- (2) BRANSON, R. E. AND MOUNTNEY, GEORGE J. Consumer Attitudes and Preferences Regarding Chicken. Texas Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 895. March 1958.
- (3) SELTZER, R. E. Consumer Preference for Beef. Ariz. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 267. October 1955.
- (4) STEVENS, IRA M. *et al.* Beef — Consumer Use and Preferences. Colo. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 495S. June 1956.
- (5) STRAUS, MURRAY A. Direct, Indirect, and Disguised Measurement in Rural Sociology. Wash. Agr. Expt. Sta. Tech. Bul. 26. August 1957.