



## BRITISH LION EGGS - A MARKETING CASE STUDY

### WHAT THE BEIS DID

#### In summary

In the mid-1990s, the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) began planning the activities which it hoped would save the UK egg industry. In 1997, the BEIS undertook a major consumer research programme utilising three different types of research, both qualitative and quantitative. Broadly, they:

1. Developed a three-stage consumer research programme, comprising:
  - Family Food Panel (a large survey of 'in-home' trends)
  - Qualitative Research – conducting consumer focus groups to gain deeper insight into the thoughts, opinions and responses to different promotional approaches.
  - Quantitative Research – to obtain numerical data on the size, propensity to buy etc of different consumer groups
2. Used research to identify problems and opportunities and develop concise 'consumer needs' and target groups.
3. Decided on short-term objectives for the re-launch and longer-term objectives for the industry.
4. Identified the marketing strategy which would be most likely to fulfil the objectives.
5. Developed tactics to reach the consumer market (including promotional activity, lobbying, retailer liaison etc).

#### In detail

##### *Stage I: Family Food Panel*

Family Food Panel is 'in-home' research, which looks at eating patterns and allows you to analyse what is happening in the market in terms of what people are eating, when and where. This research is purely quantitative.

The BEIS research found that between 1990 and 1995 egg usage declined fastest within the following segments:

- Larger households (4+ people)
- C1/C2 socio grade households



- Households with children (particularly those with 0-5 year olds)
- Non/part-time working housewives
- 17-24 year old consumers
- At main meal occasions, particularly at breakfast.
- From this research, the top priority segments of the market, those in the most urgent need of addressing, were identified as:
  - Housewives with children
  - Pre-family households/17-24 year olds

### *Stage II: Focus Group Research*

Focus groups are small groups of people, selected against certain criteria, whose views and attitudes are seen as important to assess. The BEIS research took place among groups from all over the country.

One of the key findings was that people are still concerned about health issues. The following are a selection of the opinions of consumers who attended the focus groups:

- Health concerns about eggs have become 'folklore'. There is much misunderstanding and many misconceptions about eggs and, in particular, how many is it 'safe/OK' to eat per week.
- While some older people see eggs as very versatile and quick to cook, convenience does not necessarily mean just time. Eggs are not 'failsafe', i.e. you can't just leave them to cook - they need constant supervision.
- With more autonomous eating (eating on your own), different meals at the same meal occasion, and growth in lighter meals and snacking, eggs would seem an obvious choice, however, they are not always the first food that comes to mind. Also, people are not being encouraged to eat eggs, but are being encouraged to eat lots of other foods.
- With the changing role of the housewife, eggs are not seen as a 'must have' in the cupboard by many households.
- Light/occasional users use eggs in fairly restricted ways, lacking ideas and inspirations. Some people, particularly the young, found them bland.
- Although eggs do fulfil many consumers' desired list of criteria for modern foods (quick, convenient, easy, tasty, value for money, versatile, nutritious and filling) they have to compete with 90s alternatives (microwave foods, ready meals etc)



*Some of the benefits these consumers highlighted:*

- "You can always make a meal if you've got eggs."
- "Eggs are an all-natural food."
- "With scrambled egg on toast and a grilled tomato, you've got a meal."
- "Boiled egg and soldiers – they've got all the goodness there."
- "Two or three eggs make a good meal and that's only about 30-40 pence."
- "I just classify eggs with things like butter and milk – dairy – so I just assume they've got high fat."
- "You're not supposed to let them (children) have too many."
- "If you've got high blood pressure, you're meant to cut down your cholesterol and that includes eggs."
- "I was warned off them when I was pregnant and when my little girl was born. I just haven't thought about them much since then."

Following consumer focus groups, consumer omnibus research was undertaken.

### *Stage III: Consumer Omnibus Survey*

Consumer omnibus research is a quantitative survey which gives specific responses to specific questions and can be used to reinforce information generated by focus groups.

1. The key target segments – mothers of young children and 16-24 year olds – were still among the heaviest egg users, which explains why they have had such a great impact in the decline of egg usage/sales.
2. Among the light eaters – those eating up to 1 egg per week – the target segments showed a significantly higher than average view (41%) that they should eat more eggs per week.
3. Among the heavy eaters – those eating 4 or more eggs per week – mothers with young children and the 16-24 year olds showed a significantly lower than average view that they should eat fewer eggs per week.
4. The ways in which consumers use eggs were very similar across all groups and segments, with the top 5 ways being: scrambled, fried, hard-boiled for salads, omelettes and soft-boiled eggs.
5. When suggested advertising/promotional messages were presented to them, the target segments displayed overall a greater disposition to use eggs more often than the other segments.



6. The top-rated message most likely to encourage people to use eggs more often was "Eggs are low in fat, high in protein, and good for all the family".

### **Planning the campaign – what the BEIS did**

The research suggested three key areas to focus on with regard to changing the public's perception of eggs. These were as follows:

*TO EDUCATE* Eggs are healthy, low fat and indeed are good for you!

*TO REASSURE* More than 3 eggs a week is fine/safe!

*TO INSPIRE* Look what quick, fun things you can make with eggs!

### **Ways forward: putting the research findings into practice to help sell more Lion eggs**

Moving forward was seen as a two-phase process:

#### *STAGE 1*

EDUCATE/REASSURE – in-depth messages on eggs and the Lion direct to target markets and through editorial/advertorial media

INSPIRE/EXCITE – PR/promotional messages on Lion eggs plus on-pack/in-store promotions, new product/packaging developments

#### *STAGE 2*

DEVELOP THE LION BRAND – develop genuine USPs\* for retailers and consumers

SUSTAIN HIGH BRAND PROFILE – through consistent upweighted Lion advertising/promotional activity

*USP = Unique Selling Proposition, the factor which makes this product different from all the rest.*

### **Deliver good news for eggs!**

The outcome of the research was therefore:

- Investment in research-achieved objectives
- Opportunities for egg promotion identified
- Plans for first TV advertising for 10 years



### **The new salmonella vaccine**

At the same time as the consumer research programme, a new salmonella vaccine which protected laying hens against salmonella (and therefore stopped the bacteria passing into eggs) had been developed and was being trialled. Although British standards were actually among the highest in the world, the damage caused by the media storm of the late 1980s had been done and many producers felt that investment should be made to further improve safety. Others felt that the priority was promoting eggs more heavily to consumers; there had been no advertising since the mid-1980s meaning that most of the connotations held by consumers were bad.

At this stage, the producers and packers agreed to support the BEIC and were asked to invest £8 million to relaunch British eggs: £4 million on a stringent new Code of Practice including compulsory salmonella vaccination, and £4 million on a new promotional campaign to restore confidence and increase consumption.

### **Implementing the campaign – what the BEIS did**

The BEIC launched a new version of the Lion Quality mark, popular with consumers in the fifties and sixties, onto egg boxes. The Lion indicated to consumers that the eggs inside the box had been produced to a new 'Code of Practice', which set higher standards of hygiene and animal welfare than required by UK or EU Law. The new, modern Lion was registered as a trademark of the BEIC and could only be used by egg producers and packers who signed up to the new Lion Quality Code of Practice and the Lion marketing programme. The stringent new Lion Quality Code of Practice was launched in Autumn 1998 and was welcomed by food safety experts, who had previously been critical of the industry.

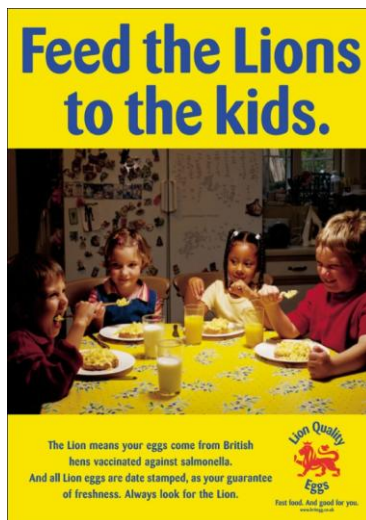
New, contemporary style TV advertisements were launched in February 1999, with the theme "Fast food. And Good For You". The ads reminded consumers how quick and versatile eggs could be, whilst reinforcing their image as a nutritious food.





The BEIC met with all the major UK egg retailers and informed them of the benefits of the Lion scheme. All of the retailers agreed to specify Lion Quality eggs and all used the new Lion logo on their packs. In January 2000, a 16 month programme to vaccinate all Lion Quality hens against salmonella was completed. The Lion Quality symbol was returned to the shells of eggs for the first time since the 1960s to reassure consumers that any egg bearing the Lion symbol had come from a hen vaccinated against salmonella. Agriculture Minister Nick Brown publicly endorsed the industry's efforts.

The *"Fast food. And good for you"* campaign continued during 2000 & 2001, supplemented by more specific messages to 'Look for the Lion' on eggs and egg boxes.



During 2001, consumer research (via focus groups) showed that the BEIS campaign had met its objective of restoring consumer confidence in British Lion eggs.

Most consumers were aware of the Lion mark and were no longer concerned about the food safety status of eggs.

Since then the BEIS has continued to contemporise the image of eggs. A new marketing campaign was developed in 2002, continuing with the umbrella theme 'Fast food. And good for you' but with new advertising using the storyline 'Eggs make a meal out of anything'; a new website – [www.eggrecipes.co.uk](http://www.eggrecipes.co.uk); and a campaign to promote the health benefits of eggs.

The BEIS continues to provide information about the Lion Quality mark to consumers, retailers, caterers and other opinion-formers. Further details on current BEIS activity can be seen on its main website [www.britegg.co.uk](http://www.britegg.co.uk).



## **Evaluating the campaign – what the BEIS did**

The BEIS was able to use the following as means of evaluating their campaign:

### **Measuring egg consumption and sales of Lion eggs**

The National Food Survey, a Government survey showing consumption of various products including eggs, showed an increase of 5% in egg consumption in 2000 on the previous year. The overall market has continued to rise and sales of Lion eggs have risen to 90% of the retail eggs market.

### **Official Government reports**

In May 2001, the Government's Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food reported 'a real success story' with human cases of salmonella halved, reflecting the dramatic fall in the levels of salmonella in eggs. In 2004 the Food Standards Agency tested more than 28,000 British eggs and no salmonella was found in any of them.

### **Media coverage of eggs**

Between 1999 and 2002 media coverage of eggs moved from largely negative to overwhelmingly positive, with headlines such as: 'Give eggs a break' and 'The good news about eggs'. This has continued.

### **Recognition of the Lion and what it stands for**

Consumer research conducted in 2001 showed that 83% of all consumers and 94% of those seeing the BEIC advertising recognise the Lion. In focus groups, spontaneous mentions and understanding of the Lion 'guarantee' replaced previous concerns over egg safety.