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PERCEPTIONS OF FROZEN FOOD PACKAGING BY JAPANESE CONSUMERS

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to explore Japanese consumer perceptions about frozen whole meals, using focus groups, a qualitative research method. A total of four focus groups involving Japanese people living in the U.S. were conducted, and in total, 39 people participated. The groups were segmented by family status. Major findings included the following:

1. Most focus group participants think there is a potential market for frozen whole meals, calling for a variety of price and menu selections.
2. The housewife participants prefer a paper-based package because they think it is good for the environment, and prefer to dispose of it rather than to recycle it, if possible.
3. A compartmentalized fiber molded tray and an outer paperboard box are considered as the best packaging.
4. The packaging should provide information about the product and the packaging itself, including safety and recycling issues, to educate consumers.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Packaging is often called the fifth P of marketing mix, which is the set of marketing tools a firm uses to reach its objectives, along with price, product, place and promotion (Kotler 1997). Packaging includes the activities of designing and producing the container or wrapper for a product, and is a potential marketing tool.

Although effective positioning of a new product requires innovative packaging, often it is not easy to decide what package type would be the most effective. Packaging designers consider the following major functions: (1) containment for handling, transportation and use, (2) protection and/or preservation of the contents, (3) communications or identification, and (4) utility or performance (Abbott 1989). When well designed, packaging is a valuable element of a firm's competitive strategy.

The essential factors that packaging can provide are: (1) Self-service: Since 53% of all purchases are made on impulse, the package must attract attention, describe the product's features, create consumer confidence, and make a favorable overall impression, (2) Consumer affluence: Consumers are willing to pay a little more for the convenience, appearance, dependability, and prestige of better packages, if you raise consumer

affluence, (3) Company and brand image: Well-designed packages can contribute to instant recognition of the company or brand, and (4) Innovation opportunity: An innovative package can provide large benefits to consumers, and also bring profits to producers (Kotler 1997).

Increasingly, consumer product firms are marketing products internationally. When those companies launch a new product in a foreign market, packaging should be adjusted or adapted. First, the name of the product should be evaluated for appropriateness. Secondly, regulations for the new market should be considered (e.g. trash or recycling laws). Most importantly, there are cultural differences which may require packaging adaptations (Twede 1997).

It is very important to develop an “optimized” packaging for the product. There are many considerations for an optimized package, such as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), consumer demands for convenient packaging, the problem of overpackaging, and needs for economization, in addition to the basic functions. Therefore, packagers should balance these considerations in order to develop a package which can best increase sales of a product as a marketing tool.

This study investigates the packaging of frozen whole meals for the Japanese market using focus groups as a qualitative research method. In the U.S., it has been more than 40 years since frozen whole meals, so called “TV dinners”, were introduced (Thayer 1994), and here the consumption of general frozen foods is about four times as much as that of Japan (Hisa 1995). However, Japanese frozen food consumption has been

increasing over the past few years and is expected to continue to grow (Hisa 1995). The experience of the mature U.S. market can provide valuable insight for the new Japanese packages.

In order to maximize the likelihood of success for frozen whole meals in Japan, research is needed to better understand how packaging characteristics are perceived. This research explores the experience of Japanese people currently living in the U.S. to compare alternative packaging characteristics.

NEED FOR STUDY

Currently, there are very few frozen whole meals in Japan, but the whole frozen food market is growing. In the U.S., it has been more than 40 years since consumers encountered “TV dinners”. Since then, the packaging techniques for those products have been improved in the U.S. (Thayer 1994; Dunn 1985; Packaging Strategies 1995; Chiang 1992).

Since many Japanese consumers have not seen many frozen whole meals, there is a good opportunity to introduce the product to Japan. Packaging elements should be adjusted or adapted to the Japanese market; however, optimization of the package for the Japanese market involves several adaptations.

Although many studies have been made on new products for other cultures, little is known about packaging itself. Due to the fact that packaging has an important role as a marketing tool, adjustment for Japanese culture is needed. For example, it is very important for Japanese to “wrap” things, therefore packaging can have an especially big role for Japanese consumers.

Japanese people currently living in the U.S. can be considered “advanced consumers” because they have encountered frozen whole meals here in the U.S. As Japanese consumers, they have some thoughts about current U.S. frozen whole meals’ packaging, and they might have perceptions of problems and even some suggestions for improvements. Since there is little existing data available about Japanese consumer

perceptions for frozen whole meals and their packaging, there is a need for research in this area.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore Japanese consumer perceptions about frozen whole meals. This research was done by using focus groups, a qualitative research method. The main objectives are:

1. To identify factors likely to increase or decrease acceptance of the frozen whole meal in Japan.
2. To investigate Japanese consumer demands for frozen whole meals and related packaging.
3. To compare the results from Japanese focus group research to the literature documenting the available Japanese quantitative survey data.
4. To find out which packaging material and form Japanese consumers prefer for frozen whole meals.
5. To suggest improvements for frozen whole meals and the packaging for Japanese markets (compared to such packages in the U.S.).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some terms used in this research are defined below and explained. Terms about type of frozen foods and a description and definition of the frozen whole meals' packages that are shown to the groups are illustrated.

Types of Frozen Foods

The term, "frozen whole meal" was used for this study, although it is often referred as a "TV dinner". *Frozen Food Age* calls them "frozen dinners" or "frozen entrees", and *Simmons Marketing Research Bureau* calls them "frozen complete dinners". All of these are the same product category. More than 40 years ago, the name TV dinner meant "Dinner will be ready while you are watching TV. Just heat [in your oven] and serve!" The meals are often prepared in a microwave oven now, however. Originally, the package itself was designed just like a "TV", a photo of the contents superimposed on a TV screen surrounded by a wood-grain panel complete with knobs (Thayer 1994).

In this study, frozen whole meals include pasta and cooked rice, which can be a whole meal, but not things such as pizza, prepared (or cooked) vegetables or side dishes. Frozen whole meal means "one meal" for one person, no matter how small or big the portion is. Typically, it consists of some meat (fried chicken, chicken nuggets, hamburger, beef strips) and some vegetables (mashed potatoes, French fries, mix

vegetables) or rice, sometimes with some dessert (brownies). A frozen whole meal can be either breakfast, lunch, snack, or dinner.

Another frozen food category is “ingredients”, such as vegetables, which are called “plain vegetables” by Frozen Food Age. They basically are simple items that need to be cooked.

Consumers often do home-freezing by themselves; henceforth referred to as home-frozen foods. These may be vegetables or meats, sometimes ready-to-cook home-made meals or already cooked meals.

Types of Frozen Whole Meal Packages

The packages that are shown to the consumers in this research are described in Table 1 (p. 9). A package typically consists of a primary package (tray) and a secondary package (outer box).

A “paperboard box” consists of a coated paperboard lid and coated, folded paperboard tray. This is used for typically low-priced frozen meals, usually with one compartment. Many fried rice and pasta meals are packaged with this paperboard box. This package can be made from a laminated roll, therefore shipping and storage cost of the empty package is relatively low. This package can have some compartments, but that is not very popular now.

A “molded fiber tray” is available in 50 standard sizes and a nearly limitless range of shapes (Ovenable Food Trays 1990). It is pulp-molded and coated with some kind of plastic, typically with PET (polyethylene terephthalate). The rigidity can be changed by changing the density. It usually has a compartment for each kind of food. A film lid is usually used for the tray. This fiber molded tray is packaged in the secondary package, typically, a paper box. Since it is molded, the shape is quite smooth. It even looks like a “china plate”.

The tray used for the first TV dinner was an “aluminum tray”. It can go directly from freezers to conventional ovens. It was widely used once, but it has decreased with the increase of the use of microwave ovens. It can also be compartmentalized for each kind of food.

A “paper folding tray” looks like an aluminum tray in shape. A coated tray is folded like aluminum, and sometimes, compartmentalized for some kinds of food. It is easily deformed because of its softness, and does not look very good. A film lid and a secondary box or sleeve are usually used.

A “plastic tray”, shown to the consumers in this research, is made out of crystallized PET. By crystallizing, it can withstand the abuse of retail distribution, going from freezer to conventional or microwave ovens, to table. It is noted for its design flexibility, resistance to oil and grease, and no appreciable effect on food taste with relatively high oxygen and water vapor barriers. It can have some compartments, and

needs a secondary package, which is typically a paper box. However, the cost is usually relatively expensive.

Table 1. Description of Sample Packages Used in This Research

tray (inside)	tray compartments	secondary pkg (outside)	note
paperboard box	none	none	(tray) + (paper lid) only
paperboard box	none	none	(tray) + (paper lid) only easy-open type
paper folding tray	none	paperboard sleeve	film lid on tray
paper folding tray	yes	paperboard box	film lid on tray
fiber molded tray (china-like)	yes	paperboard box	film lid on tray
plastic (PET) tray	none	paperboard box	film lid on tray
plastic (PET) tray	yes	paperboard box	film lid on tray

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research aims to explore Japanese consumer perceptions about frozen whole meals, and the results can be used to facilitate international marketing. International marketing is defined as “the performance of business activities that direct the flow of a company’s goods and services to consumers or users in more than one nation for a profit” (Cateora 1993, 9). Controllable elements of marketing decisions such as product, price, promotion, place (distribution), and most importantly in this study, packaging, should be adjusted or adapted within the framework of the uncontrollable elements of the marketplace: competition, politics, laws, consumer behavior, level of technology, and other related influences (Cateora 1993). In this section, the literature review of some of these uncontrollable elements is discussed.

MACRO-MARKET PROFILE

A profile of the Japanese market including cultural factors, demographic characteristics, lifestyle and attitudinal considerations, and legal/environmental topics are discussed in this section.

Cultural Factors

One of the main factors that is important to international marketing is culture. This includes traditional thoughts, food habits and shopping habits. Knowledge about Japanese culture can provide insight to the factors that affect frozen food purchase decisions of Japanese consumers.

It is true that Japanese consumers care more about how a product and its package looks than do Americans. Japanese consumers are sensitive as to the appearance of goods. Packaging (or wrapping) is one of the most important elements for Japanese people. It is often said that “Japanese culture is a culture of wrapping”.

“Geometric, rigorously drawn, and yet always signed somewhere with an asymmetrical fold or knot, by the care, the very technique of its marking, the interplay of cardboard, wood, paper, ribbon, it is no longer the temporal accessory of the object to be transported, but itself becomes an object... [the package] postpones the discovery of the object it contains” (Barthes 1982).

One of the most interesting examples of this is “gift giving” in Japan. There are two gift giving seasons during summer and winter, and they are called “ochugen” and “oseibo”, respectively, and many Japanese send gifts to people who are important for them in their personal, business, or social life. Those gifts are always wrapped very carefully and neatly; sometimes, they are over-wrapped. The wrapping is considered very important. The Japanese gift market can be a profitable segment to target since the Japanese pay a premium for well-packaged goods. For example, a U.S. fruit exporter

successfully sold grapefruit as gifts by wrapping each grapefruit in white tissue paper and labeling it with a gold sticker (Chang 1989).

If the package looks neat and fancy, people will buy it. This is one of the main reasons why Japanese goods tend to be “overpackaged”. Packaging should not be overdone, considering optimization from the view point of LCA, although it plays an important role as a marketing tool. On the other hand, American consumers seem to care more about the “inside” of the package, not the “outside”.

American packaging clearly needs to be adapted for the Japanese market. For example, an American company selling rice crackers in Japan experienced weak sales with American packaging. The package was changed to a Japanese-style design, complete with almond blossoms in pastel colors. After that, the product “just flew off the shelf” (Besher 1990).

As described above, Japanese culture affects the packaging, and it means a lot for the Japanese consumers.

Shopping Habits

In Japanese families, the wife does most of the food shopping and preparation. She has a choice of four typical types of retailers: small stores, box lunch stores, convenience stores, and supermarkets.

Small stores are small supermarkets or sometimes food specialty stores, which carry a narrow product line, usually similar in size to convenience stores, but they focus on food items. Prices are usually comparable to large supermarkets. They are located near residential areas and open usually from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. These small stores sometimes have a hard time competing for existence with supermarkets; however, they are still popular among housewives.

Box lunch stores are also specialty stores which deal with box lunches and some prepared food items. Those foods are fresh and hot. Open hours are often limited from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., like small stores and supermarkets.

Supermarkets are relatively large, low-cost, low-margin, high-volume, self-service operations. They are open usually from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in Japan. They usually have some prepared foods.

Convenience stores carry a limited line of high-turnover convenience products. They are relatively small in size, located near residential areas, and open long hours seven days a week. Items are usually high-priced. Convenience stores also have some prepared items and box lunches; however, they are pre-made, and not as fresh as the meals in box lunch stores.

People go shopping more often in Japan than in the U.S. Most Japanese consumers shop every day or every other day. Table 2 (p. 14) shows grocery shopping frequency sorted by employment status (Takahashi 1995). They go shopping quite often even if they have jobs. Since they go shopping frequently, they usually buy a small

amount of groceries for one to three days at a time, going by foot or by bike. Small neighborhood specialty stores are still popular and plentiful in Japan. By contrast, in the U.S. people usually go shopping twice a week (Food Marketing Institute 1995), typically by car and they buy a lot at a time.

Table 2. Frequency of Grocery Shopping Sorted by Employment (Takahashi and Tanaka 1995)

	average	full-time	part-time	independent	unemployed
almost everyday	46.7	31.1	50.9	45.1	53.8
3 or 4/week	33.8	37.9	35.5	29.7	33.5
1 or 2/week	17.0	28.6	10.5	22.9	11.3
others	2.5	2.4	3.1	2.3	1.4

A survey of Japanese housewives whose ages ranged from 25 to 65 in 1990 (n=220), showed that housewives mainly seek the following 9 attributes in food (Survey of New Type Foods 1990). The percentage indicates people who agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement.

- 1) Taste: They look for better taste from store to store (51%). They buy better tasting food, even if it costs more (73%).
- 2) Improvement of their health: They look for nutrition such as vitamins and calcium (60%).
- 3) Natural: They try to use “natural foods”, such as organic foods as often as they can (65%). They buy “no-additive foods” (65%)
- 4) Dietary: They look for low sugar (71%), low salt (77%), less fat (64%).
- 5) Individual meal: Almost half (47%) eat alone.

- 6) Simple and rational meals: Few opt for convenience. Only 17% do not want to make a meal which takes a lot of time to make. Only 43% often use microwave ovens. 18% often use frozen foods and/or instant foods, and only 13% buy deli and/or prepared foods.
- 7) Safety: Whenever they buy processed foods, they look for good raw materials and no additives (60%). They often buy organic foods (40%).
- 8) Hand-made: They watch TV cooking shows, and try new recipes often (38%).
- 9) Fashion-oriented: Almost one-third always buy new foods. But many fewer (16%) are influenced by TV or newspaper ads and fewer still (12%) are tempted by clever naming of the foods.

To sum up, Japanese housewife consumers seek freshness, natural, good quality, no additives, and good dietary foods when they shop for food. This may be one of the reasons why they go shopping very frequently.

Demographic Characteristics

Different demographic characteristics, such as employment, age, income, and education affect the demand for packaging attributes. For example, for the coming advanced age society, packaging should be more barrier-free for elderly people. Schaninger and Allen (1981) showed that there are significant differences across wives' occupational status groups for food consumption and shopping behavior. They found that the families of low status working wives consume more of such convenience foods as

frozen whole meals, and they also pay attention to grocery specials and sales than high-working status wives and even non-working wives.

The percentage of full-time working women influences a society's food purchase decisions. Women are usually responsible for grocery shopping and cooking, both in Japan and the U.S.; however, the society of full-time working women is more advanced in the U.S. than in Japan. Full-time working women tend to have less time to do all the necessary things that the family needs, since women are still mainly responsible for all the duties of homemakers. It seems that the state of "consumer friendly" packaging, such as easy-to-cook meals, is more advanced in the U.S. than in Japan, since the demand for "easy-to-cook" food has been stronger in the U.S.

Recently, the Japanese situation is also going in a similar direction. More women are working outside of their homes with full-time jobs, and the demand for foods that are easier to cook has been growing.

Lifestyle and Attitudinal Considerations

Lifestyle and attitudinal factors affect the consumers' perception. In this section, things that the Japanese care about when shopping are discussed.

As Table 3 (p. 17) shows, production and consumption of frozen foods has been growing in Japan (Hisa 1995). Comparing the production rates of business-use (restaurants etc.) versus home-use, for 1993 compared to 1992, there was 3.5% growth

for business-use and 9.7% growth for home-use, though about three quarters of all the frozen foods are used for business-use. This shows that home-use of frozen food is growing. This is well substantiated with the data that shows the growth of home meal replacement (see section: **Food Trends in Japan: Home Meal Replacement**).

Table 3. Japanese Frozen Food Production and Consumption (Hisa 1995)

year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
business use [tons]	709,112 (74.2%)	773,598 (75.4%)	844,766 (76.4%)	902,577 (75.1%)	934,063 (73.6%)
home use [tons]	237,594 (25.1%)	251,831 (24.6%)	261,304 (23.6%)	300,036 (24.9%)	329,138 (26.1%)
import vegetables [tons]	315,354	305,144	387,022	400,805	431,818
total consumption [tons]	1,262,060	1,330,573	1,493,092	1,603,418	1,695,019
consumption/ person/ year [kg/person/year]	10.24	10.76	12.04	12.88	13.59

In the U.S., the total consumption of frozen foods is 56.2 kg/person/year, and is about 4 times as much as that of Japan, 14.6 kg/person/year (Hisa 1995). As this data implies, frozen foods are more accepted in the U.S. than Japan, and there are many forms of frozen food packaging currently used in the U.S. It is natural to find more innovative packaging for frozen foods in the U.S. In fact, it has been more than 40 years since the first frozen whole meals were on the market (Thayer 1994), and they are still accepted by very many users. According to Simmons Market Research Bureau (1993), a total of

37.3% of U.S. households use frozen whole meals. The frozen whole meal market is estimated to be \$3.6 billion (Friedman 1995) in the U.S.

Japanese housewives care about certain qualities when they choose packaged foods. Table 4 below shows “things that are thought important by housewives when they buy packaged foods” (Miyoshi 1990).

Table 4. Things that are Thought Important by Housewives When They Buy Packaged Foods (Miyoshi 1990, extracted data)

Things they care about	answers [%]
freshness	69.4
quality/taste	60.0
natural/genuine foods	54.0
nutrition balance	37.7
low price	22.6
modified at home (can be home-made)	20.3
convenience	10.9

70% of Japanese housewives pursue freshness for packaged foods and 60% care about quality and taste. By contrast, 23% think low price is important and only 10% think convenience of the package is important.

This survey also focused on consumers’ perception of “packaged foods (general)” (Miyoshi 1990). Table 5 (p. 19) shows the results. 81% want information of the packaging material on the package, since there are many kinds of packaging materials and consumers worry about safety. They care about the environment and recycling so that 76% think about overpackaging and 62% think a one-way package is a waste of natural resources. However, at the same time, 50% want easy-opening packages and 48% want

new packaging. This implies that there are some needs for new packaging to be optimized, designing a package which is both good for the environment and convenient at the same time.

Table 5. Consumers' Perception of General Packaged Foods (Miyoshi 1990, extracted)

Consumers' Perceptions	% (multiple)
information of the packaging material should be on the package	81.1
there is over-packaging such as trays, outer box, frame	76.0
one-way package is the waste of a natural resource	62.0
want to increase easy-opening packaging	49.4
want to introduce a new package improvement	48.0
there are some packages that are not sealed up completely	46.3
there are some packages that are difficult to store in the refrigerator	33.7

The research also mentioned that there were some elderly consumers who could not tell whether the package could be used in microwave ovens or not. Older people may not understand, even if someone explains what kind of package can be used in microwave ovens. Therefore, the researcher suggested that an indicator symbol of some kind should be established.

Legal / Environmental Topics

In 1995, a packaging recycling law was promulgated in Japan, and in April 1997, the law was put into operation. Under this law, aluminum, steel, glass and PET packaging (mostly bottles and cans) should be recycled. By 2000, other paper-based and plastics packaging will be adapted under the law (The Section of Recycling Propulsion,

Ministry of International Trade and Industry 1996). Many local governments have already started recycling or are planning to do so soon. Table 6 below shows the numbers of local government and the estimated amount of recyclable materials (The Section of Recycling Propulsion, Ministry of International Trade and Industry 1996). By this regulation, certain amounts of each material that are shown in Table 7 (p. 21) should be recycled. To make this task easy, packaging should be designed with consideration for recycling. Without a doubt, the international packaging for the Japanese market should also follow the law.

Table 6. The Numbers of Local Government (upper number) and the Estimated Amount of Recyclable Materials [1000 ton] (lower number) (The Section of Recycling Propulsion, Ministry of International Trade and Industry 1996).

	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
clear glass	857 173	1,662 406	1,966 486	2,145 542	2,488 599	2,533 626
brown glass	852 124	1,666 300	1,971 358	2,149 397	2,480 440	2,525 460
other glass	1,350 306	1,609 119	1,918 140	2,101 156	2,444 171	2,490 179
PET bottles	166 4	716 21.2	1,159 44.6	1,449 59.3	1,984 79.7	2,084 89.4
steel	1,795 553	2,465 527	2,631 591	2,691 636	2,761 676	2,768 702
aluminum	1,847 111	2,473 149	2,643 171	2,705 187	2,770 201	2,781 210
paper (PE laminated)	600 9	1,173 23	1,366 30	1,526 37	1,933 48	2,000 52

Table 7. Duty Amount of Reproduction of Recycled Material in 1997 [1000 ton]. (The Section of Recycling Propulsion, Ministry of International Trade and Industry 1996).

packaging material type	estimated discharging amount	estimated recycle collection amount	the duty amount of reproduction	target recycling rate [%]
clear glass (no color)	696	406	272.6	39.2
brown glass	470	300	131.6	28.0
other color glass	172	119	89.0	51.7
PET bottles	134	21.2	17.15	12.8

One of the main reasons why a packaging recycling law was enforced in Japan is to reduce packaging waste. Packaging waste occupies 25.0% of municipal solid waste by weight, and 60.6% by volume (The status quo of industrial disposal and packaging recycling law 1997). Under this law, the federal government, the local government, the industrial firms, and consumers will take partial responsibility for the work and cooperate with one another to achieve the goal.

In spite of the packaging recycling law, there is another vision by another ministry. A vision of plastic waste for the 21st century proposed by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Japan is illustrated in Table 8 (p. 23) (Nohara 1994). As this table shows, the amount for the recycling goal is set at 90% of all the plastic waste.

Plastic can be recycled in three ways: (1) material recycling, (2) chemical recycling (energy recovery), and (3) thermal recycling (Nohara 1994). Material recycling involves no chemical change. The certain material, such as PET is recycled as the same material. For example, an empty, used PET bottle is sorted out from the other kinds of materials

and washed. Then, the bottle is broken into small pieces. At the same time, some different materials are removed. The simple composition PET material is used as a raw material for the next use. An issue is the purity of the recycled material; some people might use the plastic bottle for a secondary use, such as a replacement containers for some sort of toxic chemical, and the chemical may not be washed away.

Chemical recycling involves chemical reactions. For example, PET can be decomposed into monomer unit, and purified as monomer. Then, the monomer can be used as raw monomer for polymerization. There is no problem of contamination of any impurities of the recycled plastic. Energy recovery also involves chemical reactions, and the plastic is liquefied (decomposed) into oil or gas. Then it can be used as fuel. This is also categorized as chemical recycling.

Flammable disposables can be thermally recycled. The heat that is generated by incineration can be used as heat for power generation. There are 1,900 incinerator in Japan, and 116 of them (6% of the total) are currently doing thermal recycling and 300 (16%) can do thermal recycling by increasing the system (Nohara 1994). If the wastes are flammable, they do not need to be sorted. However, there are some issues about exhaust gas and burning calories. A typical Japanese incinerator is designed to deal with 2500 kcal/kg, however, plastics produce an average of 7500 kcal/kg, and this causes heat damage to the incinerators (Honda 1993).

In this vision of plastic waste for the 21st century, “thermal recycling and energy recovery” are considered as 70% of the total, and 20% by “material recycling”. The

packaging recycling law intends “material recycling, and it does not clarify about thermal recycling or energy recovery currently. Therefore, there are questions if “plastic converted material”, such as laminated films, co-extruded films, and aluminum-laminated papers, should be recycled as material, or as thermal energy.

Table 8. A Vision of Plastic Waste for 21st Century in Japan (Nohara 1994).

	current	midway	goal at the beginning of the 21st century
land-fill	37%	20%	10%
incineration	37%	15%	0%
thermal recycling/ energy recovery	15%	50%	70%
material recycling	11%	15%	20%

In Japan, disposal is mainly done by incineration as contrasted with land filling in the U.S. Table 9 below shows the differences in the ways of disposal (OECD Environmental Data 1993). Therefore, thermal recycling can be a choice for certain packaging.

Table 9. Differences in the Ways of Disposal in 1990 (OECD Environmental Data 1993).
[unit: 10,000 tons/year]

	total amount	compost		incineration		land-filling	
		amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
Japan	4,927	0.4	-	3,668	74	1,681	34
U.S.A.	17,750	380	2	2,890	16	11,830	67

To use thermal recycling, an incinerator should be designed to deal with high burning calories. Plastics, such as polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene, that have about 10,000 kcal/kg of burning calories are desirable. PET's burning calories are about 5,000 kcal/kg, and it is not so desirable for individual thermal recycling (Yoshiaki and Okuwaki 1994).

Since most Japanese incinerators are designed to deal with relatively low burning calories of 2,500 kcal/kg, it is desirable to keep the burning calories low. Plastics usually give higher burning calories than paper (4,000 kcal/kg) (Honda 1994); paper is considered better than plastics for incineration. This concept is well known in Japan, especially among housewives. They think paper is better for the environment due to this reason.

EMERGING TRENDS

In this section, emerging trends related to frozen foods in Japan are explored. The food trends both in Japan and the U.S. are discussed, and product and packaging innovations which enable frozen foods to improve their quality are illustrated. These emerging trends also affect consumer perceptions.

Food Trends in Japan: Home Meal Replacement

In recent times, Japanese consumers tend to look for health, food safety, luxury, and convenience in their food habits all at the same time. They seek reliable, enjoyable, and smart meals. But with more working women who have less time to prepare food, the main trend in Japanese foods is the growth of alternatives to home-prepared meals.

Home meal replacement includes everything from carry-out foods from a restaurant to frozen foods from a supermarket, which do not need “cooking” at home, or only need “re-heating”, like prepared foods from supermarkets or department stores, box lunches from convenience stores or box lunch stores, and delivery foods from restaurants. Recently, people do not go out for dinner very often, and desire to eat meals at home, but do not often want to cook.

The desire for home meal replacement has been increasing since women have been entering the work force in ever greater numbers, and also singles are increasing. Therefore, food habits have also been changing from “simplify of cooking” and “corner-cutting of

cooking” to “home meal replacement” (Nakayama 1994). Although this home meal replacement was originally far below “mother’s home-made taste”, now it has been improved and is sometimes much better than “mother’s taste”. It is now considered as “professional taste that you can make at home”.

Easy to prepare packaged foods were introduced to Japan in the early 1960’s (Kaneda 1994). In 1958, the first instant food (noodles) was made by Nissin Foods, and it was considered to be the start of the art in easy-to-prepare foods. Two years later, in 1960, the first frozen croquette was made by Nichirei. Instant coffee, Coca-Cola, corn flakes, and instant soup were also introduced to the market in the same era. In 1968, Otsuka Group marketed their first retort food, curry paste. All of those brought convenience and some Westernization of foods to the Japanese consumers. The standard of living was changing dramatically for the better at that time.

By 1975, consumers had already been satisfied with the basics and had started seeking to add variety and higher quality to their diets. They started to think more of their health, and balanced nutrition. At the same time, people started to seek convenience. Convenience stores were introduced in 1974 and lunch box stores were introduced in 1976.

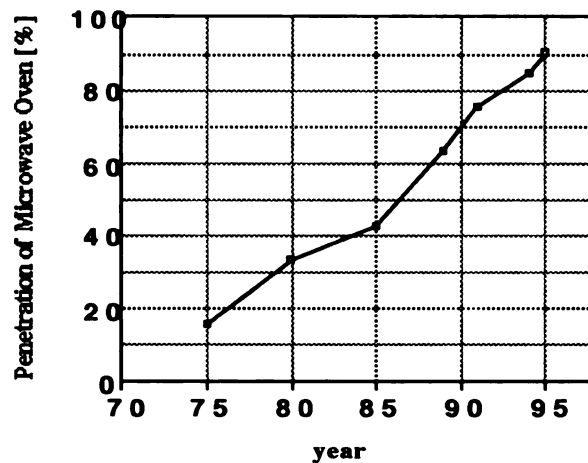
The change to larger refrigerators and the use of microwave ovens affects the packaging for quick meals. According to Toshiba, one of the biggest manufacturers of refrigerators, home-use refrigerators have been purchased in greater numbers for a few years (Tomobe 1997). It was said that the life cycle of a refrigerator is about eleven

years. Since the last peak of sales was 1990, the next peak was anticipated about 2000. However, over 1995 and 1996, sales have been quite good.

When Japanese consumers replace their refrigerators, they tend to buy bigger ones. The demand for bigger (more than 121 liter) refrigerators is 2.4 times as much as smaller ones (less than 120 liter). The penetration of refrigerators is 98.4%, and 62.6% is the penetration of bigger ones (more than 300 liter) (Toshiba 1997). The size of Japanese refrigerators has been getting bigger and the freezer has also been getting bigger. Therefore, it is possible that the acceptance of frozen foods and lifestyle changes are reflected in these bigger refrigerators.

The history of microwave ovens is also related to the frozen food market growth. In Japan, microwave ovens have become popular in recent years. Thus, the market for microwavable foods has been growing over the past ten years. Figure 1 (p. 28) shows the penetration of microwave ovens in Japan (Higo and Hirano 1995). Currently, microwave ovens are used by more than 90% of the population in Japan.

Figure 1. Penetration of Microwave Ovens in Japan (Higo and Hirano 1995)



Microwave ovens have been becoming more popular mainly for two reasons: working women and changing family structures (Higo and Hirano 1995). As mentioned before, women have been working outside of their homes. In addition to that, the family style has also been changing. People used to live with large families: grand parents, parents and children. However, now people live as a nuclear family. They tend to eat meals individually, using microwave ovens to re-heat them.

Alternative for Quick Meals

To fulfill the consumer needs, many kinds of food technologies have been developed. Basically, they are categorized as follows to control microorganisms, which are enemies of food packaging (Ishitani 1993).

- **Aseptic package:** packaged under aseptic conditions, can be distributed and stored at room temperature
- **Retort package:** sterilized at 121°C, at least 4 minutes (at food core), can be distributed and stored at room temperature
- **Chilled foods:** distributed and retailed above -5°C and below +5°C
- **Frozen foods:** distributed and retailed below -18°C

Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. An aseptic package can be sterilized in a short time. Therefore, it does not need a high-temperature resistant package, and results in a better taste. In addition to that, it can be distributed and stored at room temperature. However, this technique for solid foods is still under development.

Retort packages can also be distributed and stored at room temperature. They do not need a “cold-chain”, a distribution system at low temperature for frozen foods. Shelf life can be more than one year, if it is packaged with high barrier materials such as aluminum foils or SiO_x-coated films. The disadvantage might be the taste of the foods. Since this technique needs high temperature and a relatively long time to sterilize, it is difficult to keep the original flavor. However, some related techniques that improve the taste are under development. Chilled foods, which are distributed and retailed above -5°C and below +5°C, can have a fairly good flavor. However, shelf life is not so long as retort or aseptic packaged products.

Frozen food, which is distributed below -18°C , is one of the best ways to keep the “freshness” of the foods (Kaneda 1994), though it needs cold-chain distribution. It gives an emotional security of close-to-natural food taste. It also can have a long shelf life if stored under proper conditions.

Retort foods and frozen foods can be considered as competitive food categories since they are one of the home meal replacement items. Retort foods were originally invented by NASA, though they have not been a big success in the U.S. market yet. A Japanese company used that technology to launch an original menu on the market in 1968, and retort foods have been quite successful in Japan since then (Kenmochi 1993). They are also easy to cook: usual serving directions are “boil the package for a few minutes and serve”.

On the other hand, frozen foods had not been so popular in the past, though the “cold-chain” for frozen foods has developed well. One of the main reasons why frozen foods were not so popular in Japan was the taste (Kaneda 1994). It was often said that frozen foods did not taste good. Another reason might be the convenience: they need to be defrosted and cooked. Some of the following factors have made frozen foods popular recently: frozen food technology (improvement of the flavor) and the history of use of electrical appliances such as bigger refrigerators and microwave ovens.

Many new frozen and retort foods have been introduced in Japan in the last decade (Nikkei Database Research of New Food Products 1997). As Table 10 (p. 31) shows, about 40 new frozen food products per year have been introduced to the market.

Although business-use of frozen foods occupies about 75% of all frozen food consumption, new home-use frozen food products have been steadily growing.

Table 10. New Japanese Food Product Introductions (through April, 1997)

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
frozen foods	10	36	39	32	41	42	46	35	46	27
retort foods	8	28	53	44	43	55	42	43	57	19
canned foods	11	20	30	18	25	17	15	16	21	8

Retort foods are quite popular in Japan, too. However, as mentioned earlier, it is still difficult to make a “solid food” with retort techniques. Thus, frozen foods have been seen in a new light. In addition to that, many of the retort foods can not be “one meal”, as frozen whole meals can be. In Japan, most retort foods are packaged in a aluminum-laminated pouch. The food can not be cooked in microwave ovens with its original package; it needs to be placed in another plate to heat and serve. Recently, some products on the market are being improved in this area through innovation of the sterilizing process and the packaging.

Frozen Foods by Vending Machines

A notable new market for frozen foods is sale by vending machines (Tanetani 1994). In Japan, there are numerous vending machines: on the sidewalks, in front of the shops, and everywhere outdoors. Table 11 (p. 32) shows the number of vending machines and their sales in Japan (Kurosaki 1993). In this table, the number of instant

meal vending machines is 61,040, however, this may not include frozen food vending machines because they began very recently. In 1994, it was estimated that there were about 2500 vending machines of frozen foods with microwave ovens (Tanetani 1994). They are usually located at rest areas of highways, bowling centers, video game centers, or breakrooms of some companies; they are usually indoors. This market is going to grow now, and the variety of frozen foods influences the sale. Therefore, new types of frozen foods are being sought.

One of the reasons why there are so many vending machines outside in Japan may be that there is very little vandalism. According to an annual report of the Japanese police in 1990, the number of crimes and the crime rate (per 100,000 person) in Japan (1.4/100,000 person) was much less than that of the U.S. (220.9/100,000 person) (Japan Police Annual Report 1990).

Table 11. The Number of Vending Machines and their Sales in Japan (Kurosaki 1992).

type	food products	number	sales [in U.S. \$] [\$1 = 100 yen]
beverages	soft drinks	1,945,680	19,207,417,680
	milk (paper carton)	160,690	1,475,134,200
	coffee (paper cup)	242,910	2,366,626,720
	liquor/beer	201,760	3,613,584,240
foods	gum/candy/chocolate	65,870	112,708,500
	bread/cake/relish	17,550	85,556,250
	instant meal	61,040	838,158,100
	ice cream/shaved ice	46,890	202,017,000
others		2,227,820	19,576,303,640
total		5,466,110	62,405,283,210

New Food Product Needs for Senior Citizen Market

Considering the growth of the senior citizen population, a market for elderly people will be a big business. Indeed, some market research implies the necessity of new food developments for the so-called “silver market” in Japan (Saito 1991; Takekawa 1995).

The population of Japanese people whose age is over 65 is estimated to be 20% in 2010 and 25% in 2050. At the same time, the population of single senior citizens is estimated to grow. Table 12 below shows numbers of households with senior inhabitants (Saito 1991).

Table 12. The Numbers of Households with Senior Citizens (over 65 years old) (Saito 1991).

	single senior	senior couple	family with senior citizens	total household with senior citizens	total household
1975	630,000 9.1%	910,000 13.1%	5,390,000 77.8%	6,920,000 20.6%	33,600,000
1985	1,180,000 12.7%	1,650,000 17.8%	6,450,000 69.5%	9,280,000 24.3%	37,990,000
2000	2,110,000 15.4%	3,320,000 24.3%	8,230,000 60.3%	13,650,000 30.2%	45,140,000
2010	2,620,000 16.8%	4,400,000 27.8%	8,790,000 55.4%	15,860,000 33.8%	46,950,000

As the table above shows, the population of single seniors is growing. In 2010, the number of single senior households is estimated to be 2,620,000, and makes up 16.8% of all households with seniors. The total number of households with seniors is estimated to grow to 15,860,000 by 2010, 33.8% of all households.

The research also shows some misunderstanding about the senior market. The seniors are usually considered “old”, but not so “old”; they are old in age and may have some problems with eyes or ears, but they can read and hear, have strong opinions, and mostly they are active. Senior citizens are not very wealthy; they are usually considered “quality-oriented”, but not always. Saito concludes that “old people are living like young singles”; they eat routinely, eat what they want, and do not always pay attention to their health. Sometimes they try to pay attention to their health, by choosing low salt or low fat foods.

The senior citizens use prepared foods and frozen foods because they do not want to put much effort into cooking just for themselves. Saito suggested that there is a large potential market in frozen whole meals for Japanese seniors. In the U.S., it is said that frozen whole meals are recommended as a nutritionally balanced diet by dietitians. It is always good to cook a nutritious meal, but in reality, it is also good to have “easy-meals” that can be ready in a few minutes by easy-microwaving.

Food Trends in the United States: Home Meal Replacement

In the U.S., the majority of the women worked in the home as late as 1980. They shopped for the groceries, cooked the meals, and did all the necessary things that the family needed (O’Connor 1997). Today, things have changed. Women work outside of

the home and spend less time on all of their homemaker responsibilities, and more men are more likely to share household tasks.

Women and men who spend their time working outside the home, have less time for meal preparation than in the past. The time spent in preparation of meals has decreased in the last 60 years (Schur 1989). In 1934, it took about two and a half hour to prepare dinner. In 1954, modern appliances made the cooking easier, and dinner took one hour. In 1974, frozen foods helped to prepare dinner, and it turned into 30 minutes of preparation time, since there were not many microwave ovens. Today, dinner can be ready in 15 minutes using prepared foods.

In the U.S., frozen foods once provided satisfactory meals which could be ready in 30 minutes; however, the quality, such as taste and texture, was not so good. Recently, frozen foods quality has been improved. However, the fresh chilled prepared food markets are currently growing more than frozen foods in the U.S. because of their freshness, convenience and high quality. They make it easy to prepare dinner.

Major trends in the U.S. food market (Sloan 1996) illustrate the popularity of alternatives to home meal preparation. Nowadays, almost two-thirds of women work outside of the home. One-third of adults do not cook as much as they used to, and 25% of single adults admit weekday dinner cooking is not worth the effort. 25% of families and 30% of singles do not want to clean up after a meal. 53% want something that requires little preparation, and 39% do not feel like cooking. 44% would rather stay home during leisure time than go out. A total of 46% of consumers eat meals at home that were

not prepared there: sometimes 38%, pretty much every time 8%. They get “quick meals”, 48.0% from fast-food chains, 25% from restaurants, 12% from supermarkets.

Today, there are about 422,000 public vending machines in the U.S.: drinks, candies and snacks (VENDtrack 1995). There are also innovative vending machines which can store and thaw frozen foods, minimizing microwave time. This type of machine can carry frozen whole meals, soups, and snacks. Currently, there are just 300 - 500 of these machines in operation, but this market is growing.

Frozen Whole Meals

The first appearance of TV dinners on the U.S. market was in 1954, under C.A. Swanson & Sons, which is now part of Cambell Soup Co. It has been more than 40 years, and Swanson dinners are still on the market (Thayer 1994). During these four decades, much of food technology itself, as well as packaging, has been developed, and electric appliances, especially microwave ovens, have impacted packaging.

The original package used for frozen whole meals was the aluminum tray. It could go from freezer to the oven directly. Most importantly, it could be molded and formed into compartments (Thayer 1994). Nowadays, it is quite difficult to find aluminum trays in the individual-sized frozen whole meals, though they are often used for institutional and family-sized frozen meals.

In 1986, the original aluminum tray was replaced with a new one suitable for use in microwave ovens as their use increased: a thermoset polyester tray and a paperboard tray. The frozen whole meals were a previously sluggish segment of the frozen foods industry that by the mid '80's had gotten hot (Dunn 1985); Microwave use has dramatically increased the market for frozen whole meals in the U.S. The thermoset plates were often used for expensive items due to the expensive cost and the packaging quality, and the paperboard trays were, and are still, used for less expensive items.

Since the technology had progressed in the late 80s, thermoset polyester trays, which are co-polyester and difficult to recycle, were replaced by homo crystallized PET (CPET). The CPET trays are considered "environmentally friendly" due to the ease of recycling ('1-PETE' impresses supermarket packager 1991).

Although Campbell Soup had been using plastic trays for 10 years since 1986, they switched their frozen whole meal trays to compartmentalized fiber molded trays (Packaging Strategies 1995). According to Niemiec, vice president and director of packaging at Campbell, "As the economics and performance factors [of our packaging choices] change, we follow through, particularly if it's not a consumer issue.... Consumers of frozen whole meals are more focused on product than packaging today.... the compartments are important, but material is not". One result for the change from CPET to fiber molded trays is a 10% reduction in material use, resulting in higher-speed, lower cost tray production without sacrificing tray strength.

The fiber molded tray is dual ovenable, compartmentalized, and the most biodegradable content of all trays used in the frozen foods industry. Fiber molding provides a smooth contoured surface and the 2-ply laminated construction allows excellent customer decorating. The most attractive part of this tray is the weight reduction, at least 25% compared with the corresponding CPET tray, resulting in cost reduction (Chiang 1992).

Currently, frozen whole meals are usually packaged in (1) CPET, (2) coated paperboard, (3) fiber molded, or (4) aluminum trays. The packages are selected to fit the product characteristics and might be selected by the company's policy.

In 1996, Campbell Soup Co. was starting a mail-order program, the Intelligent Quisine, to sell frozen whole meals, which are specially designed to battle high-blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. This series was developed with the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association. This shows frozen whole meals can be designed for special dietary quality, and can be positively used to prevent or control those diseases (Campbell offers healthy meals by mail 1996).

Consumer Demands for Frozen Whole Meal Attributes

The U.S. consumer's current demands for frozen whole meal attributes are shown in Table 13 (p. 39) (Friedman 1994). Most (91%) of respondents rated "good tasting" as the most important attribute. Satisfying serving size (65%), high quality of ingredients

(62%), and nutrition of the meals (59%) are also considered important. This research is very important because these demands may apply to the Japanese consumers when frozen whole meals are introduced to Japan.

Previous research (Shnorbus 1988) has illustrated that the taste of the frozen dinners is not as important as health concerns and convenience. However, the consumers of the 1990s are not willing to sacrifice good taste for the sake of nutrition.

Table 13. Frozen Whole Meals 'Top 10' Consumer Attributes

	attributes	importance rating [%]
1	good tasting	91
2	serving size is satisfying	65
3	quality ingredients	62
4	nutritious meal	59
5	good value for money	49
6	quick and easy to prepare	47
7	brand I trust	47
8	low in fat	42
9	good balance of taste/nutrition	39
10	any family member will eat	39

A profile of heavy users of frozen whole meals (Spectra Marketing Systems Inc. 1994) showed that baby boomers are top dinner consumers. By age status, the heaviest users were households (family or singles) headed by 45-to-54-year-olds, and this was followed by heads of households aged 18-24. Households with no children and the largest incomes were also among the heaviest users.

Product and Packaging Innovations

Technologies surrounding frozen food production, such as food processing technologies, frozen food packaging technologies, and distribution technologies are discussed in this section.

Since frozen foods are stored below -18°C , micro-organisms can not grow.

Therefore, no preservatives are needed. Freezing also preserves nutrition; frozen spinach, harvested in season and frozen right away, can have more vitamin C than fresh spinach out of season (Hisa 1996). Frozen foods need less fat and less salt than other preserved foods, and can be very nutritious. And since no severe heating is required for sterilization, they can be better quality than aseptic or retort foods.

There are basically six technologies that affect the popularization of frozen foods (Kaneda 1994). Each technology has been developed and improved, and it has resulted in better taste, freshness, stable quality of the foods, and economization of the processing.

- 1) ingredient material technologies: stability of the ingredients' quality is increased by standardization and new freshness preservation technologies.
- 2) cooking and processing technologies: new processing equipment that makes it possible to make "professional taste", "home-made taste", and "traditional taste".
- 3) freezing technologies: quick-freezing makes it possible to keep the freshness of the original foods.
- 4) packaging materials and machines: innovative packaging and packaging machines protect frozen foods properly during the process and distribution.

- 5) logistical (distribution) technologies (cold-chain): high-tech facilities and information systems provide distribution of small lot and high frequency, and Just-In-Time distribution.
- 6) defrost and cooking technologies: microwave ovens make it possible to quicken the defrosting process and make cooking at home ease.

Japanese Frozen Food Innovation

An interesting survey on the production and distribution of new type food products has been done by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Survey of Production and Distributions of New Type Foods 1990). They investigated 273 companies and 19 distributors which were dealing with new food development. The new food developments the companies emphasized are shown in Table 14 (p. 42). They emphasize products' healthiness, naturalness, safety, and convenience. These factors correlate well with the survey data about shopping habits of housewives mentioned earlier (see Table 4, p. 18).

Table 14. Emphasis of New Food Products Development [extracted data] (Survey of Production and Distributions of New Type Foods 1990).

development needs	answer (multiple choice) [%]
improvement of health	85.0
natural-oriented	53.5
safety-oriented	43.0
convenience-seeking	32.5
dietary (salt, sugar, fat)-oriented	31.0
food quality and gourmet oriented	28.5
luxury foods	18.0
fashion-oriented	12.0
individual meals	10.0
freshness-consciousness	9.5

The survey also investigated which market the food companies were targeting. 51.1% of them target the “senior market”, 40.5% target “middle age”, and 34.0% target the “young age market”. It is natural that they emphasize their food development toward the “senior market” because there will be more senior citizens in the near future.

Not long ago, frozen whole meals first appeared in Japan. Some importers had a contract with one of the biggest frozen food brands of the U.S., and some items from the U.S. were imported into Japan. One other company had a license with another one of the biggest frozen food manufacturers, and started making similar products very recently (April, 1997). They are just like original frozen dinners. However, not many consumers know and use these products. The market could grow, but now, it is still small.

Some Japanese frozen food companies and other food companies also have similar items, such as frozen pasta, fried rice and pilaf, but they are not completely like “TV dinners”. They are often packaged in a plastic bag, not with a tray. They have to be

heated in the plastic bag, and then placed on their own plate. They are popular, but as so convenient as American packaging.

Perceptions of General Frozen Foods by Japanese Consumers

A survey of perceptions about general frozen foods by Japanese women who buy frozen foods was conducted in 1994 by *Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)*, 04 March 1995.

The respondents had an average of 6.7 kinds of frozen food in their freezers, croquette (46.2%), mix vegetables (33.3%), Japanese vegetables (32.9%), dumplings (26.2%), French fries (23.7%), frozen pizza (23%), frozen shrimp (23%), pilaf (22%), gratin (22%), and hamburgers (21%).

Almost all of the respondents buy frozen food at a supermarket (98.3%), and fewer shop in co-ops; a cooperative society (35.7%), department store (13.4%), food specialty store (12%), and convenience store (8%). They usually buy 2 to 4 items at a time, when frozen foods are on sale. 62% of the respondents think they bought frozen food more than three years ago, and only 3% think their frozen food purchasing has decreased.

The respondents keep the frozen foods only a short time, average of 9.2 days: 1-3 days (21%), 4-5 days (18%), 6-7 days (21%), 8-10 days (20%), 11-14 days (4%), 15-19 days (5%), 20-29 days (6%), and only 5% keep the food more than 30 days. They think frozen food will maintain good quality in the freezer for an average of 2 months: less than

1 month (24.6%), 1-2 months (37.8%), 2-3 months (22.7%), more than 3 months (14.9%).

They use frozen foods when they have no time to cook (77.1%), no time to go shopping (76.2%). Other advantages are that it is fast and convenient (69.9%), it can be used in small quantity (65.7%), it can be stored longer, and it is easy to prepare. Disadvantages are; unknown ingredient material quality (16.2%), too much butter coating (15.5%), and expensive prices (13.5%).

About half (48%) feel guilty to use frozen foods, and 52% do not. The respondents do home-freezing both of ingredients (average of 5.8 kinds) and ready-to-cook, or fry food (average of 2.5 kinds). Their favorite frozen food items are: (1) croquette, (2) pilaf, (3) gratin, (4) Japanese-style noodles, and (5) steamed and grilled rice balls.

In 1995, a survey about "cooked rice" was done by *Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)*, 08 April 1995. In general, rice is a very important food item for the Japanese, and pre-cooked rice are quite popular in Japan. 56% of males and 76% of females used pre-cooked rice in the last one year, and 32% of them eat it regularly. And 87% of the people surveyed used pre-cooked rice that was frozen, while retort use was 36.0% and aseptic was 18.0%. The respondents look for product date (48%), additives (24%), brand name (22%), ingredient materials (20%), and calorie information (3.9%) when they buy pre-cooked rice.

As these two surveys show, general frozen foods have been becoming more popular in Japan recently. There are many frozen food items that need to be cooked. Frozen meals such as pre-cooked rice are popular, but the package is not so convenient in Japan currently.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHOD

In this section, the research method used in this study is stated. First of all, focus groups as qualitative research are explained. Then, justification for using focus groups in this research is argued. Finally, project details such as participant profile, recruitment, meeting details, and discussion outline are given.

FOCUS GROUPS AS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Focus groups are discussion interviews conducted in group sessions to discuss a specific topic. A key strength of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (Morgan 1997). Focus groups generate qualitative data. When used as the principal source of data collection, as in this research, the process is called a “self-contained method”.

Focus groups are also used as a supplementary source of information in studies where data will be used to make a survey. There are also “multimethod” studies that combine two or more procedures of gathering data.

A focus group is a discussion where a company or organization tries to get opinions of consumers, using their own words, ideas, images and thoughts, about new products. Many companies are doing focus groups now to get ideas directly from consumers about new or existing products.

The process of a general focus group project (Crank 1997) and specific application to this project will next be described.

First of all, both research and project objectives should clearly be reviewed, refined and delineated; who is the ultimate audience, and what you want them to do.

Secondly, existing data should be gathered and reviewed next; things that are already known and are not known, efforts that have been tried, reasons why this research effort is needed, things that need to be explored such as general topics, themes and specific terms, images and messages.

Thirdly, a primary research plan should be developed. The existing research often tell us what things should be investigated. There may be things that we have to determine. Whether focus groups meet our need or not, whether quantitative research will be needed in the project as well, and whether focus groups should precede or follow surveys. Using focus groups first helps to identify themes, terms and messages to test in surveys. Focus groups following surveys help explore unexplainable findings, help “flesh-out” relationships and perceptions identified.

Fourthly, focus group participants should be identified and profiled. Group compositions should be identified to meet project objectives. For projects geared toward

persuasion or action, people who are not at all persuadable should be eliminated unless they impact target audiences. Both demographic and lifestyle characteristics should be considered. Homogeneity within a group offers the following advantages: easier isolation and exploration of perceptions and easier drawing of conclusions, increased likelihood that participants honestly reveal their opinions, decreased chances that individuals are intimidated or uncommunicative.

Fifthly, a research schedule and venue should be decided. The location should be easily accessible, usually no more than 30 minutes away, and a neutral place that does not bias discussion or participation agreement. Target market schedules should be considered: seniors and housekeepers during the day, working persons early evening.

Sixthly, participants should be recruited, usually 2 weeks before the procedure. Random calling, using qualification screens, is often done. Over recruitment may be done based on the likelihood of attendance such as age and gender linkage. Potential participants should be informed about the basic discussion topics and about audio or video-taping.

Seventhly, a discussion outline should be prepared. Potential discussion topics should be anticipated with probes and prioritized; allocate time and the priority of the topics.

Finally, the focus groups are conducted. It is good to be flexible; topics may be taken as they come. Unanticipated but valuable perceptions should be explored. The

discussion should be controlled so that one or two do not dominate or others not participate.

Immediately after each focus group discussion, findings will be analyzed and recommendations should be developed, while the discussion outline should be reviewed. The discussion proceedings should be professionally transcribed, and they should be edited for context clarity. Broad general themes or perceptions should be looked for. Specific terms, images or messages that resonate should be identified. Strategic and tactical recommendations can be developed.

This research was completed as described above, since it is designed to get perceptions, and focus groups were used as the principal source of data collection. In general, the next four steps are done as needed: (1) Create or revise new product, services, public relations tactics, organization plans or message plan, (2) Test product, service, public relations, promotional concepts or message concepts, (3) Implement plan (place product or media), and (4) Assess project success, follow-up with additional survey or focus group research as needed.

For Japanese perceptions of frozen whole meal packaging, there is little existing data available. In general, focus groups are particularly appropriate for exploration of consumer behavior process where terms describing determinations of behavior (intent to purchase) need to be identified and evaluated. Therefore, focus groups were used in this study as a qualitative research tool.

PROJECT DETAILS

A total of four focus groups, involving Japanese people living in the U.S., were conducted for this study. The groups were segmented by family status. The first two focus groups consisted of Japanese students at Michigan State University (MSU). The second two groups involved older Japanese women, with and without children, from the Japan Business Society of Detroit Women's Club.

It is natural to consider that there may be significant differences in general receptivity to frozen whole meals and specific evaluations of packages based on age and gender. For example, women assume primary responsibility of food purchase decisions in Japanese homes. Additionally, younger "less traditional" women may be more open to the concept of frozen foods than are older mothers or grandmothers who might be perceived as being lazy or less fit as a mother should they opt to serve a microwaved meal to their families. By design, the groups did not include students of packaging or merchandising behavior/consumer behavior, since these groups are particularly not representative of consumers because they are too aware of the importance of packaging.

The first focus group consisted of twelve MSU students, six male and six female. Ten were singles and two were married. Ages for this group was from 23 to 32 years old. The second focus group also consisted of MSU students, however this time, female only. Five participants were present and the age range for this group was from 21 to 23.

The third focus group involved eleven housewives without children. There were two age ranges in this group: one was younger, from 25 to 35, and another was older,

from 40 to 60+. The fourth and last group involved mothers, housewives with children. There were eleven people, and their ages ranged from 30 to 49.

In total, 39 Japanese people participated, six male and thirty-three female (see Appendix A for detail). The first two groups (with MSU students) were conducted in English, with the help of an expert in focus group work. The following two groups (with housewives) were conducted in Japanese.

Subjects were recruited by e-mail and/or by phone from the MSU Japanese Student Association and the Japan Business Society of Detroit Women's Club. The information provided to participants mainly stated the following:

- A summary of the research objectives
- "The focus group session will last for approximately two hours."
- "No experimental or risky procedures will be used."
- "Your identity will be kept confidential."
- Mr. Tanizaki will be listed as the focus group contact person.
- "You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by attending the session."
- A follow-up phone call was used to confirm participation and to encourage attendance.

For the first two focus groups, the School of Packaging Conference room (room 159) at MSU was used. Since the focus groups were held on Sundays, there was free parking at the back of the Packaging building. The room has a large and closed table, which allowed for better audio-taping and improved the ability to establish eye

contact/read facial expressions. The third and the fourth focus groups were done at a private home, offered by one of the participants. It was a convenient time and location for them to get together.

The sessions lasted one and a half to two hours. The sessions were kept within two hours because participants tend to get bored if it takes longer than this. In order not to miss any words, the sessions were audio-taped with two cassette recorders to provide a back-up in case one did not work or the sound quality was poor.

The first two focus groups were conducted in English with a help of a professional moderator. The last two groups were conducted in Japanese because of the limitations of participants' English abilities. During the session, name tents or name tags were provided for each person to facilitate conversation. Beverages and light snacks were available to make participants comfortable.

The participants, the Japanese students and the housewives, were chosen because they intend to return to Japan and at least minimally represent normal consumer attitudes. However, since they have experienced various frozen food packages in the U.S., they also have some insight and perspective on the various packaging systems. Women have been identified as the group most directly responsible for food purchase decisions; therefore this research focused primarily on women's opinions. Since there might be meaningful differences in receptivity to frozen food products based on family structure, there were separate focus groups for women, with/without children.

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Discussions began with a brief explanation of this study, and general instruction about focus groups. Then, the participants introduced themselves and had small talk to establish a relaxed atmosphere.

The main discussion began with a general topic about “food purchase decisions”. Next, the topic focused on frozen whole meals. The “tested” package options for the frozen whole meals, such as outer boxes and inner trays, were examined, shown and discussed. The detailed discussion outline is in Appendix B.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Since the focus groups in this research were segmented by family status, each result will be discussed separately. There were similarities and differences between the different market segments. This chapter is divided into 3 sections: (1) findings from student groups, (2) findings from housewife groups, and (3) comparison of responses by the students and housewives. At the same time, the qualitative results of this focus group research will be compared with the available quantitative survey data that have already been shown in the literature review section.

FINDINGS FROM STUDENT GROUPS

This section describes findings from the first two focus groups of students at Michigan State University. A total of 17 people, 6 men and 11 women, participated in these sessions.

Because they are students, most eat dormitory food. Only 5 students out of the 17 live off campus and do not have dorm food. Among all of the participants, 6 of them sometimes cook for themselves, but not regularly.

Major findings from the student groups can be summarized as follows:

- Their image of frozen foods is very poor. They do not like frozen foods.
- There are negative beliefs about frozen foods: they think frozen foods are filled with preservatives, salt and fat, and are less nutritious.
- Most of the students want low priced frozen whole meals; however, some of them want quality rather than “cheap” foods.
- They tend not to be concerned about recycling of packaging. Some people do recycle, but not always.
- They preferred plastic trays. Plastic trays make the product look more appealing.
- They are aware of possible migration problems from the package, such as smell or chemical taste, but are not sure which is safer, plastic or paper trays.
- They said that they prefer green colored packages because they look healthy. A warm color such as red or orange is also good, because it tempts the appetite.

Beliefs about Frozen Foods

To open the discussion, the moderator asked students to describe their food habits, such as who was responsible for shopping and cooking. They were then asked to describe what were the important things for them when they chose foods. This led to a discussion of lifestyle and demographics, factors within the consumer behavior.

Participants discussed issues of “freshness”, and lifestyle when they went back to Japan.

Lifestyle

In Japan, grocery shopping is almost always the responsibility of women, especially mothers. Cooking is also the responsibility of mothers. They usually go grocery shopping every day or more than three times a week to get some food for one or two days. Usual places for grocery shopping are small stores which are located near their houses, within 10 minutes by foot or by bike, or on the way home from their part-time jobs. They use trains for commuting, and usually, there are some stores in front of, or near the station. They buy only a little, but they shop very frequently.

People who live alone do not always cook. There are a lot of choices to eat out or buy take-home meals: there are many restaurants and snack bars, noodle shops, and box lunch or convenience stores. Convenience stores are widespread in Japan, and they are open usually 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so people can always get something to eat when they go there. Although box lunch stores are not available at midnight, they provide “hot meals”, which are just-made, within a short time. A supermarket or a grocery store offers “prepared foods”, a lot of selection, sometimes original name brands. Since regular store hours are usually from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., most people can find time to go shopping on the way home if they decide to buy prepared foods. There are also many instant foods, such as instant noodles and retort foods. Therefore, single people do not have to cook very often.

The participants said that the most important thing is “freshness” of the foods when their mothers go shopping and choose food. This is one of the main reasons why

they go shopping very often. Another reason might be because of the type of meals Japanese eat, mainly fish. Since Japanese people eat fish about as often as they eat red meat, they may need to shop almost every time that they decide to eat fish. In Japan, fish is not usually frozen, it is almost always fresh. For example, “fresh” fish may be alive: it was just caught that day.

They said that they do not like artificial things, namely preservatives or chemical additives. Students prefer “ready-to-cook” or “easy-to-cook” foods because they are convenient.

They discussed whether they would be busier or less busy when they go back to Japan. They expected that they would be much busier. Female students desired to get full-time jobs, and wanted their husbands to help with the cooking when they got married.

Some opinions from students were:

- “I don’t want to cook after a day of work...”
- “I will try to get a full-time job, and am expecting to be busier.” (female student)
- “I want my husband to cook, and I will marry a man who helps me with shopping and cooking.” (female student)

From the discussion above, we can tell that (1) there are some needs for an easy meal, however, (2) there are many alternatives in Japan. Also, (3) young women have been getting busier over the past years.

Demographics

These focus group participants were students and mostly single; they represent young people who live alone. This category includes college students, and single, relatively younger, busy working people. The difference between students and working singles may be economics. Students are usually relatively tight with money, and working singles can afford to spend some money for their food. This point affected the results of acceptance of price and product characteristics.

Non-Packaging Determinations of Product Acceptance

Next, they were asked about frozen foods and introduced to the concept of frozen whole meals. First of all, they were asked if they knew about frozen whole meals or not. Secondly, general frozen foods choices were asked, and then, participants talked about images of frozen foods. Finally, participants discussed the “need for the frozen whole meals” and the “opportunity for the frozen whole meals”. Factors which affect product acceptance were discussed.

Image of Frozen Foods (general)

The students think that cooking is a noble job for mothers, and it is very important for the mother to do the cooking by herself, considering her family's health.

They thought that using frozen foods is not a good thing. They said that women who use frozen foods are considered “lazy” housewives, and considered “not doing her job”.

Students’ images for frozen foods were very negative. From their words:

- “Frozen foods are not fresh!”
- “Frozen foods must have a lot of salt and preservatives.”
- “Frozen foods taste bad! My father works for a frozen food company, but I don’t like frozen foods. If he buys and brings them home, we never eat.”
- “They are unhealthy. I don’t use them.”
- “I don’t like frozen foods. Why? Because I don’t like them!”

Price and Value of Frozen Whole Meals

Since they are students, they are relatively short on money. They perceive that frozen whole meals are expensive. There was also a difference between gender. Male students tend to care more about the volume of the meals, and are quite price-conscious. Some male students said that some frozen meals do not have enough food, and if you eat more than one, it costs a lot. On the other hand, female students tend to consider quality and taste more than price. The female students are also more conscious of special dietary aspects, such as low salt, low sugar and less fat.

The most desirable price for a frozen whole meal is around \$2. This is because there are many alternative quick meals in Japan, with competitive prices. This topic will be discussed in the following section.

There is an inconsistency in the students' beliefs about "price". Most participants talked about and whole heartedly agreed on this topic. Japanese consumers like inexpensive foods, but they do not like unreasonable inexpensiveness. It is better to have a suitable price, not so expensive, but also not too cheap. If it is too good of a deal, they would be suspicious and they would not buy it.

Available Alternatives for Quick Meals

There are many alternatives for quick meals in Japan, and each of them has some advantages and disadvantages. Table 15 (p. 61) shows available options for quick meals and the advantages and disadvantages discussed by the participants.

As the table shows, the students' current image of frozen foods was very poor. They may not even think of frozen foods for quick meals because there are many alternatives in Japan; they can eat out, go and buy a box lunch at a box lunch or convenience store, or get some instant foods or prepared foods at a supermarket. They choose a meal from these alternatives by considering the advantages and disadvantages, including the price.

Table 15. Current Choices for Quick Meals

available choices	advantages	disadvantages
instant noodles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fast (within five minutes) - no need to use own plates - long shelf life at room temperature. - relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low nutrition - too much oil and salt
retort foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fast - superior shelf life - relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not so easy to cook: packaged in aluminum laminated pouch/not microwavable
box lunch stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hot, freshly prepared - balanced nutrition - variety of choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open hours: usually not open late at night - short shelf life - relatively expensive
box lunches by convenience stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open hours (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) - variety of choices - balanced nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short shelf life - relatively expensive - prepared, not freshly
prepared foods at supermarkets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - variety of choices - relatively good taste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open hours: usually not open late at night - short shelf life - single items
eat out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - variety of choices - balanced nutrition - taste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expensive - open hours: usually not open late at night
frozen foods (current image as an alternative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fast, convenient (microwavable) - relatively expensive (compared with other choices) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taste not good - nutrition? - concern of migration - short shelf life

Product Characteristics

Participants discussed if they knew about frozen whole meals or not, and what kinds of frozen food choices were available in Japan. All of the students know there are

some kinds of frozen meals, such as cooked rice, and some people know about frozen pasta. Those frozen meals are defined as frozen whole meals in this study, but are not exactly like “TV dinners” because they consist of just a single kind of food.

Available and popular frozen food items were discussed. When the student participants were asked what comes to mind when they think of frozen foods, they cited mixed vegetables, some plain Japanese vegetables, ready-to-fry foods (croquette, dumplings), ready-to-stir-fry (cooked rice, vegetable mix). These products need to be cooked minimally. Some students mentioned that the most popular frozen foods recently are microwavable foods such as croquette and dumplings, which are already cooked, and can be used for box lunches. Very often people bring a box lunch to school or work, and making a quick box lunch is one of the most important tasks for a mother or a wife in the morning. Therefore, microwavable frozen foods, which are “easy-to-cook”, such as croquette, are well accepted now by housewives.

The groups then discussed what items were in their mothers’ freezers, and the shelf life of those frozen foods. The first thing they mentioned was ice and ice-cream. Then they agreed that the next most common things in their freezer is “home-frozen foods”, which are prepared from fresh ingredients at home, and kept in the freezer. These items are not originally frozen foods, for example, homemade hamburgers. Students thought that they usually have very few items in the freezer.

Most participants said that they use frozen food items within less than a week, one month at most. They do not keep frozen foods very long, because they think those

frozen foods can not be stored very long, maybe a maximum of two months. The fact is that most frozen foods can be kept more than one year. One frozen whole meal company said shelf life of the frozen meal was 18 months by telephone interview (February 1997). There are obvious misunderstandings about frozen foods' shelf life. Another reason that they do not keep frozen foods for long is the storage space. Usually, the refrigerator that a student has is not very big. When they want to eat a frozen whole meal, they go and buy it, come back to their place, cook and eat it. They also mentioned they buy only one or two when they want them.

The group then talked about frozen whole meals' taste here in the U.S. A few people have found some good frozen whole meals, but many of them have never even tried one because they have very poor images for general frozen foods. They believe the flavor is "not suitable" for them, and sometimes it is true. The reason why they feel "not suitable" is the cultural difference. Seasonings for food are very different from each country. They mentioned that frozen whole meals available here are too spicy or too salty, even though they are sometimes low fat. One female student mentioned that a frozen cake she tried was too sweet, too.

Clearly the participants felt that product taste should be adjusted for Japanese consumers. Meal variety should be carefully chosen. They suggested having Japanese foods just like box lunch alternatives that box lunch and convenience stores have. The selections that box lunches have are Japanese-style fried chicken, hamburger, and some kinds of Japanese traditional food items with white rice.

The name for the frozen whole meals was discussed. It is good to have something like “homemade”, “mom-made”, “healthy”, “home-style”, and/or “natural”. These names are considered to be good by the student participants

Promotion / Advertisement

They suggested that advertisement is quite valuable. Through TV commercials, how good the flavor is and how easy the meal is to cook should be emphasized. Since this group had very poor images of frozen foods in general, they strongly recommend eliminating those images by educating consumers through ads. Things that should be explained include nutrition and dietary information, calories and fat information, good flavor, good nutrition and ease of preparation.

There were some suggestions that manufacturers could develop a menu series with a “signature” on it: such as that of a famous restaurant or a famous chef. Frozen whole meals that have a taste you can not make easily at home would also be good products.

The group advised that another target market would be senior citizens who are living alone or couples. They said, to reach those people, the frozen whole meals should be Japanese foods and have special dietary characteristics, especially good nutrition, low fat and low salt.

Almost all participants said these frozen whole meals would be an “emergency food” for a time that they can not spend much time cooking or go to get other choices, not

for regular meals. Therefore, it would be good to have some information about long shelf life in the advertisements.

Packaging Factors Affecting Product Acceptance

Finally, questions about packaging were explored. Before seeing actual packaging samples of frozen whole meals which are sold in the U.S., participants were asked what factors they feel are important for frozen whole meal packaging.

Unaided (No Sample) Discussion Findings

The first thing the student participants mentioned was the dating issue. They prefer a “manufactured date” and/or “best-if-used by date”. Almost of all of them said that they always check the date when they buy foods, even frozen foods.

In the U.S., nutrition information is required by law on food packages. In Japan, it is not required legally yet, but participants said that they want information about nutrition (some information about nutrition can be seen on some Japanese food packages recently). In addition to that, they also check whether it has artificial additives or too much salt in it. They tend to be very health-conscious.

In the U.S., there are very many “low-fat” and “light” products, but this is not so in Japan. The participants want those “low-fat” products and they also want information

about calories and fats. They said that such label information will be a help to sell more to health-conscious consumers.

The student participants said that the brand name does not matter, or matters very little for them. The group talked about the private label (store brand), which is the generic brand and is usually less expensive. The reason why the students do not care much about the brand name is that they are typically low on money. If it is about the same quality, as far as frozen whole meals are concerned, they do not want to “pay for the brand name”.

Packaging Viewing / Handling Discussion Findings

Next, samples of frozen whole meal packaging were shown to the participants, and they discussed the following topics: recycling ease/disposal issues, tray design, utility (performance) and secondary package design. Descriptions of sample packages are listed in Table 1 (p. 9).

Recycling Ease/Disposal Issues

The student participants were not very concerned about recycling. They are more interested in package convenience and neatness. As a result, the favorite packaging for the student participants was a plastic tray with compartments for each kind of food, plus an outer paperboard box. They said it looks the best, even though it uses more material.

Although this package is technically recyclable, the student participants said that they would probably not recycle it.

There were some participants who cared more about recycling. However, they mentioned that they are not sure which packaging material is better for the environment, paper or plastic.

Tray Design

The group discussed characteristics of the tray, such as design and material for the tray: paper or plastic. The best tray for frozen whole meals chosen by student groups is a plastic tray with a compartment for each kind of food.

All participants said that they like a tray with compartments for each kind of food, and do not like some kinds of foods to be mixed. One student referred to “sogginess” of some products which should be crunchy, such as fried chicken. They preferred a compartmentalized tray to avoid this problem. They said that the compartmentalized tray looks nicer, more expensive and higher quality.

There are some reasonable concerns about the tray material. A plastic tray is durable enough for microwave heat. Some participants have had problems with paper trays: when the food was cooked, the paper tray got soft, and was difficult to handle.

A plastic tray looks nice and clean. However, they said that they are not sure about migration from the plastic tray. When it is heated, some chemicals might get into the food. A few of them said that sometimes the meal actually smells like plastic. They

mentioned that frozen food companies should put information about migration concerns on the package. They guessed that the packaging is approved by some regulation, but there are still some concerns. For that reason, some participants actually preferred paper trays rather than plastic.

Some participants did not like the paperboard tray, in spite of the fact that they prefer milk in paper board cartons rather than plastic bottles. They also mentioned that they are not sure paper is safe to use in a microwave oven. (Note: This opinion was by participants who have never used frozen whole meals.) Even though the paper board tray is on the market as an approved product, they still questioned its safety. Therefore, it seems that it is good to have information about packaging concerns on containers to clarify the safety and to educate consumers.

When shown a “china-like fiber molded tray”, they could not readily identify whether the material was paper or plastic. Most participants preferred this fiber molded tray after the plastic compartmentalized tray since the fiber molded tray also looks nice

Even though the color of all of the plastic trays was black, the participants preferred the color for the tray to be a “light” color, such as white or off-white. Those colors have a cleaner image and make the food look better.

Utility (Performance)

Even though the packages are designed to be used in a microwave oven or a conventional oven, the student participants said that they would not use a conventional

oven. They feel that a frozen whole meal's advantage is convenience and speed; they never think of using conventional ovens. In fact, accessibility to conventional ovens is often limited for students.

Participants referred to "easy-open ability", as a good function to have. They said packaging should be consumer friendly, especially for the coming "advanced age society", with large numbers of senior citizens. One participant said his mother might not find where to open some packages if she use them.

There were two separate issues about frozen whole meal size: volume of the meal and storage. A few male students said the frozen whole meal should "fill-me-up" with one package: it has to be big enough. However, from the view point of storage, it should not be too big because of limited space.

The group talked about storage, and discussed package size and shape. The package should fit into their freezer, and it is better to have a box for neat storage. If it is in a bag, it is difficult to arrange. They said that it does not have to be in a box, but the shape should be like a box.

Secondary Package (box) Design/Graphics

The participants said that they prefer a green color for the packages because it looks "healthy". A warm color such as red or orange is also good for the package color, because it tempts the appetite. White looks clean, but also looks cheap. They did not like purple since it is not a color for foods. They also said that the picture should look

cooked and hot, on a plate, and not in the actual tray. Many said that they would serve such a meal on their own plate, rather than the package tray.

Summary of Problems and Suggestions by the Student Participants

Considering that the participants said the most important thing when they choose foods was “freshness”, an expiration date would be a most important thing to have on the package. In addition to that, information about shelf life would also be good for educating consumers and eliminating misunderstandings. In Japan, packaged food has a “best-if-used-by date” and often also “manufactured date”, but in the U.S., most code dating is only for the “sell-by date”.

Next, the participants discussed an issue of “protection of the product” and “overpackaging”. They do not like too much packaging, but they also do not like the package that is only a lidded paperboard tray. They think that the environmental issues are marginally important, but they tend not to act on them.

Other problems of current packaging were stated such as soggy foods, tray softening and deformation, possible migration from the package, and recycling ease/disposal issues. However, student participants did not have any specific suggestions for these problems.

FINDINGS FROM HOUSEWIFE GROUPS

This section describes findings from the last two focus groups: Japanese housewives living in the U.S. The total of 22 people, 11 housewives without children and 11 housewives who have a family with children under 18 years old (henceforth referred to as “mothers”), participated in these sessions. Since many of them have been filing the role of traditional Japanese housewives for more than ten years, they are considered “professional” housewives.

Major findings from the housewife group are as follows:

- The images for frozen foods are quite positive. They use frozen foods.
- They know about frozen food benefits, and use frozen foods positively to reduce their work and spend more time on other activities.
- The price of frozen whole meals for a family is dependent on the family size: If they have children, it should be less expensive: if not, it can be very expensive.
- They do care about the environment, and believe paper is better for it. However, they prefer not to recycle, but instead dispose of packages.
- They preferred paper-based trays. Fiber molded trays look appetizing enough to serve in. Even paperboard trays are acceptable because they do not like overpackaging. Since their stance is for disposal, paper is considered better for incineration.
- None of the housewives feel any guilt for using frozen foods, but many of them may feel guilty if they use frozen whole meals as a regular meal.
- They are aware of possible migration problems from a plastic tray. They think there is some migration from it when they cook in it with a microwave oven.

- They said that they prefer “light” colors such as white or off-white.

Housewives without children preferred some printing on the tray, but mothers think it is not necessary, because it might make the package cost more.

The housewives’ average stay in the U.S. is about two to three years (see Appendix A for detail). There were two housewives who have been here in the U.S. for more than 30 years. Two housewives for 10 years, and other 18 housewives have been here for about or less than three years. The shortest was only three months. Though they live in the U.S., they live with Japanese food habits. They buy many Japanese foods at Japanese grocery stores, and cook Japanese meals. Even housewives who is staying here for more than 30 years do so. There was not significant differences in perceptions of frozen foods due to the length of the stay in the U.S. This may be because they live just like they used to in Japan. However, their shopping habits are different from their Japanese ones since the environment is different. This will be discussed in the next *Lifestyle* section .

Beliefs about Frozen Foods

This discussion followed the same format as the student focus groups. Some of the findings were similar to the student focus group sessions. Therefore, this section will focus on perceptions that differed from student focus groups.

Lifestyle

As mentioned earlier, grocery shopping is almost always the responsibility of housewives, and it was true for all of the participants. Cooking is also primarily their responsibility. They said housewives who had part-time or full-time jobs in Japan went grocery shopping once a week, and went “fill-in” shopping at least once more during the week, making at least two shopping trips a week for working housewives. Housewives who are “full-time housewives”, almost all go shopping on an everyday basis. They buy some foods for a day or two, and go shopping very frequently. The usual place for shopping is the supermarket once a week for main grocery shopping, and small stores twice a week or more for fill-in shopping. These findings corresponded well with the survey data described in chapter 2 (Narukawa and Takakuwa 1993: Takahashi 1995).

Here in the U.S., housewives go main grocery shopping once a week, and go fill-in shopping once or twice. At the same time, they also make another trip to the Japanese grocery store to get some Japanese foods. Their food habits are still like Japanese, even though they live in a different country.

Housewives agreed that the most important thing for them is “freshness” when they choose foods. This coincides with the results from the student group findings. By reason of seeking freshness, they are very aware of the dating issue. They said they always check the date manufactured and/or “best-if-used by” date. Even though 5 of the housewives have two refrigerators in their apartments, which means a lot of storage space for food, they go grocery shopping at least twice a week for fresh food.

Some participants mentioned avoiding additives, and some housewives go shopping where they can buy organic foods. Even if those stores are far away from home, they think it is worthwhile. These results coincide with the survey of new type foods (1990) and another survey (Miyoshi 1990).

Demographics

The participants of these two focus group are all housewives, however, there are some demographic differences. The housewives without children can be also divided as “younger” wives who have not had any children and “older” wives who might have grown children that live on their own. On the other hand, the mothers are basically a similar age group, and their children are still living at home and attending elementary or secondary school. These categories are shown in Table 16 below. In some cases, responses varied by age or family status, as will be described. Appendix A describes participant profiles in detail.

Table 16. Housewives' Participant Categories

	family	housewives' age	children's age
group 1 - housewives	without children	younger	-
group 2 - housewives	without children	older	-
group 3 - mothers	with children	relatively young	before junior high
group 4 - mothers	with children	relatively old	junior high, high

Non-Packaging Determination of Product Acceptance

There were significant differences in the perceptions of frozen foods between the students and housewives. This may be because housewives are responsible for shopping and cooking, and students are not. This section will show the differences.

Image of Frozen Foods (general)

All of the housewives had many positive images about frozen foods, in contrast to the negative images by students. The groups were asked whether they feel guilty to use frozen foods because, according to the students, they are doing “corner cutting” by using the frozen foods and not doing their “noble job” as housekeepers. Their answer was “NO”, basically. All of them said they use frozen foods quite often and effectively for cooking.

However, the housewives may feel guilty if they use frozen foods, especially frozen whole meals, to use them as regular meals. They use frozen food quite often and effectively, but they tend not to use frozen prepared meals for the regular main dish. They do not feel any guilt to use frozen foods as ingredients, but may feel guilty *if* they use prepared frozen meals *regularly* for their family, especially for their husbands. They may also feel guilty for using not only frozen meals, but also prepared foods or instant foods since they feel not doing mothers’ or housewives’ job.

The result of the survey of perceptions of general frozen foods by Japanese women who buy frozen foods, which was conducted by *Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)* in 1994, was a little different from the focus groups' result about "guilty". According to the survey, 47.5% of the Japanese housewives still feel guilty to use general frozen foods. Since the focus group participants are living in the U.S., they are considered to represent more "advanced Japanese housewives" than the housewives living in Japan. Therefore, they may not feel guilty to use general frozen foods very much. However, even the advanced housewives still feel guilty to use frozen whole meals as a regular meal.

The participants said that over the past five or more years, frozen foods have been establishing their position in Japan with improved quality. They actually had many negative images some time ago, but almost none now. The group agreed that the flavor of frozen foods has been getting better, and now, it is considered that they have come up to the housewives' standard for taste. They said it is a good thing to use frozen foods because it makes their cooking time more efficient. They said that sometimes they could get better selections than they could easily make: such as some famous restaurants' famous chef's meal. These results are well substantiated by the survey data, by *Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)*, 04 March 1995: 62.1% of the housewives think the amount of frozen foods has increased in three years, and the advantages of them have gone up as well.

Housewives' images for frozen foods are quite positive. From their words:

- "I use frozen foods very much, because they are convenient."

- “Frozen foods make cooking easier.”
- “Frozen food taste is getting better recently. They are pretty good.”
- “I heard frozen foods can be very nutritious, because they use the best way to keep the nutrition while they are processed.”
- “Frozen foods tasted bad ten years ago, but they have been improved.”

Housewives tend to have much more information about frozen foods than students. They have learned about frozen foods. One participant said there are cooking magazines, and they sometimes have a special article section about “how to use frozen foods effectively”. That implies it is now fairly accepted to use frozen foods regularly, and education about frozen foods is being done. However, there are still some misunderstandings about additives. One participant mentioned that she worries about the ingredients for the whole meal, whether they are good or not.

As described in chapter 2 (p. 40), there is no need for chemical additives, such as preservatives, since microorganisms can not grow at frozen food storage temperature. However, some participants mentioned that they worry about some additives of frozen foods.

The participants actually have a hard time finding good (or suitable) tasting products here in the U.S., while Japanese frozen foods taste good (or suitable) to them. Here in the U.S. they did find some good ones, but the frozen food products tend to be too salty or spicy for Japanese, even though they sometimes have less fat. These are the only drawbacks of their frozen food images.

Price and Value of Frozen Whole Meals

There were notable differences between housewives. The housewives without children tend to spend a lot more money than do the mother groups. Because they have fewer expenses, they are not so worried about the price. The affordable price range for frozen whole meals they said was about 10 dollars. They did not want to buy inexpensive products because they tend to seek quality. The group agreed that if the frozen whole meals were something special, like a signature brand of a famous restaurant or chef, they would be able to spend more than \$15 for one meal. This is because they thought if they went to a famous restaurant, they might spend more than \$50 a plate easily; however, they can get quite the same quality foods at their home if they are provided as a frozen whole meal. The price can be \$25 if the quality is quite special. Their perception for the most inexpensive frozen whole meals' price was around \$7, for their own use.

The housewives without children felt that frozen whole meals can be special or emergency foods, not regular meals. As previously mentioned, there are many alternatives for quick meals. The target positioning of frozen whole meals by the housewives without children group is "better quality and convenience for a quick meal than any other choice".

The mothers were much more concerned about the price of the frozen whole meals. They discussed that the frozen whole meal could be a meal for their children, for their husbands when they could not take care of them, or for themselves when no other

family members are at home. Frozen whole meals would be an emergency meal for an occasion with no time for cooking, or an easy meal for one person. At the same time, frozen whole meals for children can be a regular meal, or a snack.

Many mothers agreed that it could be a regular meal for their children. They also mentioned that their children love these kinds of frozen meals, and enjoy the power to choose which one they want. This is because Japanese children like the “Western (versus Japanese) style meals”, such as fried chicken, french fries, pasta and hamburgers.

If the frozen meals were for adults, quality and price could be better, but not superior; they would accept a price range of \$3.50 - \$4.50, since there are less expensive alternatives if the cost of frozen whole meals is above \$4.50. If they are for children, the price range should be around \$2. This is because of the number of children and frequency of the occasion as a regular meal or snack. There was an interesting opinion by some participants: if the frozen meals are used for themselves alone or for friends who come over for lunch, the frozen whole meals can be more than \$10 or \$15. They want high quality foods for themselves and for their guests. The discussed price range of quick meal alternatives are shown in Table 17 (p. 80). As this table shown, the most reasonable price range for a frozen whole meal is \$3.50 to \$4.50, since there are many competitive alternatives.

Table 17. The Price Range of Quick Meal Alternatives

available choices	typical price ranges (a piece)
instant foods	\$1.00 - \$2.00
lunch box	\$5.00 - \$6.00
prepared food item	\$1.00 - \$3.00 (each single items)
eat-out	\$7.00 - \$10.00
frozen whole meals (general)	\$3.50 - \$4.50

The mothers shop for frozen foods on sale, buy more than two, and keep them in their freezer. They said that they would not be embarrassed if some friends knew about this; they would even recommend frozen foods to their friends. They said that they might have been embarrassed ten years ago. However, some participants mentioned there might be some mothers who would be embarrassed who live in the country-side because they live in a more traditional environment than city-living people.

Product Characteristics

The housewives were asked if they knew about frozen whole meals or not. Only one person, who has been in the U.S. for only three months, had not known them, and almost all of them have used frozen whole meals in the U.S. There were some mothers who use them quite often for their children.

Available and popular frozen food items were talked about. They named the same things as the students groups: mixed vegetables, some plain Japanese vegetables, ready-to-fry foods (croquette, dumpling), ready-to-stir-fry (cooked rice, vegetable mix), items which need to be cooked minimally. These results match the survey data by *Nikkei*

Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan), 04 March 1995. Many of these are not whole meals, but are ingredients or single items.

In addition, one participant mentioned that she has used a Chinese cuisine set from a famous restaurant as a gift. She did not expect them to be frozen foods, but they were, and they tasted good. She recommended that the special frozen whole meals could be merchandise for “gift giving”, which is a big Japanese traditional market, and many of them agreed about this.

The groups then discussed what items were in their freezers, and the shelf life of those frozen foods. They said that their freezers are filled with frozen foods. They said they usually keep frozen foods for one or two months, on average. If they did not use them for six months, they tended to keep them for up to a year, and after that throw them away. They think shelf life of the frozen foods can be as long as six months, but even after three months, they have doubts about the quality of the food. As the survey data by *Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)*, 04 March 1995, shows Japanese housewives tend to think that frozen foods do not keep good quality so long: an average of just 2 months.

The group then talked about frozen whole meals’ taste here in the U.S. About two thirds of the participants have tried some kind of frozen whole meals. Many of them have had a hard time to find a “good” (suitable) frozen meal for them, but some of them actually find good ones. They said that they got information about good frozen whole meals from friends, or from children. It is usual that Japanese women living in the U.S. make a society by themselves, but their children usually participate in American culture.

When the children go to their American friends' houses, they get information about which frozen whole meals are good since the American families use them. Some kinds of pasta are quite popular among Japanese participants.

One older housewife without children uses frozen whole meals on a regular basis, since she and her husband are older and live by themselves. She said it is not worth it to make a big dinner for just two of them. She thinks there may be more couples just like them and those seniors will use frozen whole meals, as well as Saito suggested (Saito 1991). The same opinion was made by the other group, and many agreed about this.

All of the mothers said that their children love frozen whole meals here in the U.S. It is usual, even in Japan, that children tend to like "Western style" foods rather than traditional Japanese foods. There were a few participants who use frozen whole meals here in the U.S. regularly as a kid's snack. They do not want them to eat junk food, and frozen whole meals are considered balanced, nutritious and convenient. They wished that there would be similar frozen whole meals in Japan, because frozen whole meals are very useful here.

The participants recommended that frozen whole meals can come in different varieties for each target market. Note that they said the most important thing for frozen whole meals is the "taste". The meals should taste good, first of all. Japanese style meals can be widely accepted, and some expensive meals, such as famous restaurants' meals would be nice: they might be Chinese cuisine set, or French foods, or some kind of Ethnic meals. For older people, traditional Japanese foods with good quality and special dietary

considerations would be suitable, since there is a fact that frozen whole meals can be used as special dietary foods for those who have some disease such as heart problems or diabetes.

All of the housewife participants think that the frozen whole meals would have a market now or in the near future. Almost all the housewives said that they would buy them when they go back to Japan, at least one or two for emergency food. Some participants were quite positive that they would be heavy users, and they believed that there were a lot of mothers who agree with them in Japan.

Packaging Factors Affecting Product Acceptance

Before seeing the packaging samples, the groups discussed packaging factors in general. The housewives brought up the dating code as the first thing, the same as the student groups. There is a group of housewives who are conscious of “natural foods” for their family, and another group of housewives who are conscious of their weight. Therefore, it is good to have information about additives and nutrition. For all housewives, brand name seemed to be important. If one of the big trusted brands makes a frozen whole meal, they might give it a try. If it is a no-name brand, they do not trust it.

Packaging Viewing / Handling Discussion Findings

The housewives were shown the same samples that the students had discussed. These were described in Table 1 (p. 9). They discussed the same topics as the student focus groups: recycling ease/disposal issues, tray design, utility (performance) and secondary package design.

Recycling Ease/Disposal Issues

The housewives do care about recycling and disposal issues. They used to recycle expanded polystyrene meat trays and paper milk cartons in Japan, on a voluntary basis. There is also a law in Japan about recycling: such things as newspaper, glass, steel and aluminum are sorted from other household wastes and processed separately. There is no need to recycle flexible packaging materials which can be easily disposed of and incinerated currently. Therefore, they believe paper-based material is good for the environment. Bulky packaging is disliked, such as plastic bottles.

The question was: could packaging affect their choice of frozen whole meals or not. If the same products were in different packaging, such as a plastic tray or a paper tray, which would they buy? The answer was, something that they think is good for the environment, which, in this case, is a paper-based tray. However, if it is a different product, packaging would not affect their choice: the first thing is the taste.

Tray Design

All housewife participants like a compartmentalized tray for each kind of food, just like the student groups. The groups discussed material for the tray: paper or plastic. The best tray for frozen whole meals chosen by the housewife groups is a “compartmentalized fiber molded tray”. This result is different from student groups’ preferred material of a “plastic tray”. The following are some reasons:

- A paper tray was considered as “environmental friendly”.
 - “A plastic tray is difficult to dispose of; it could be recycled, but if possible, I do not want to do the chore.”
 - They said they worried about the chemicals from plastic trays. When they are microwaved, some chemicals could go into the foods.
 - Paper has a cleaner image than plastic.
 - The preferred color for the tray is a “light” color, such as white or off-white.
- The housewives without children liked small printing on the tray, but the mothers did not care: one mother said she did not want to spend too much money for packaging. Pay for the food, not the package!

The only cited drawback of the paper-based tray is the lack of stiffness after cooking.

Utility (Performance)

The housewives without children tend to make frozen whole meals with conventional ovens, whereas mothers use microwave ovens. Although it is very easy to

use a microwave, the housewives without children prefer the texture produced by conventional ovens. The mothers seemed to be more time-conscious, and that is why they use microwaves. A microwave oven is also much safer than a conventional oven for children to use.

Some participants who have tried frozen whole meals had some problems with opening the lid on the tray. The film lid is usually heat-sealed to the tray, and it is difficult to peel because the film lid is too weak. Sometimes, it tears.

Sometimes directions for cooking are also confusing. For example, a package may say "Remove film from mashed potatoes, and poke holes in plastic cover over meat." However, the lid is not designed to do this easily and improvement is needed.

Like students, the housewives were concerned about the size for storage. Packages should fit into their freezers. The shape should also facilitate storage.

Secondary Package (box) Design/Graphics

The housewives preferred light colors, white and off-white, and warm colors such as orange and red for the package. The student participants said that purple for the package is not good because it is not a color for food. However, the mothers said that it might good for kid's meals. A purple package is impressive, and kids can easily remember it because kids are able to choose the frozen whole meals by themselves. Some animation characters that are popular among children are also good to have on the package of kids' meals.

The housewives said that it is good to have a cooked, hot-looking meal served on a china plate, not on the actual packaging. However, some participants mentioned that kid's meals can be on the actual packaging, because they liked it; the plate looks like a kid's meal at a restaurant. Other participants said that if there were a big difference between the actual food and the picture, they might not buy it again; the picture should correspond reasonably with the actual contents.

Summary of Problems and Suggestions by the Housewife Participants

Because the participants have used American frozen whole meals, they have some recommendations about the packaging. The problems of current packaging and improvements for them were suggested by the groups.

They said that the outer box makes storage easier, and it is good to have, but they do not want any over-packaging. If there is something that aids storage and eliminates over-packaging, it would be better.

One participant suggested that if the paper tray would come in the paper box, the box could be used to keep the soft tray after the food was cooked. Make a perforation on the box, which is shaped like the bottom of the tray, and use the box as a holder. It would keep the tray in shape, and make handling easier. They also mentioned that the outer box and tray were proper packaging, not over-packaging.

The housewives were concerned about plastic smell or taste from the plastic tray.

The package should have quite a good performance on this point.

COMPARISONS OF RESPONSE DIFFERENCES BY THE STUDENTS AND HOUSEWIVES

There were significant differences in perceptions of frozen foods between the groups. A total of 4 focus groups were conducted, the participants of the first two groups were students, and those of the last two were housewives. In this section, comparisons of response differences by students and housewives are discussed.

Non-Packaging Determinations of Product Acceptance

Perceived images are the most significant difference between students and housewives. Table 18 (p. 90) shows the difference; the students have many more negative images than do the housewives. The students, while they like the frozen whole meals' convenience, perceive that the frozen whole meal is not good for them. The housewives, on the other hand, see frozen whole meals as providing a good alternative, ranging from meals for kids to gourmet meals for themselves and guests.

One reason for these differences is that the housewives are "professional housewives", and students may not usually shop and cook. The housewives get information from some cooking magazines, stores and advertisements. Furthermore, the students who are far from home may be nostalgically longing for their mothers' home cooking.

Table 18. Image Difference between Students and Housewives

group	positive images	negative images
students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fast, convenient (microwavable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taste bad - bad nutrition - salt, fat, artificial ingredients - not fresh - unhealthy - additives, preservatives - mother not doing her job - relatively expensive
housewives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long shelf life (if stored right) - balanced nutrition - good taste - fast, convenient (microwavable) - makes cooking easier - can be fresh, and better nutrition than fresh foods - special taste of famous chef - children like - no guilt in using general frozen foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (possible low quality ingredients) - may feel guilty if use frozen foods as a main, regular dish. - additives (some participant)

As has been pointed out in the literature review section, frozen foods have many advantages which are perceived by housewives correctly (Hisa 1996; Kaneda 1994). The students have misunderstandings in almost all of them; they have the images of a-decade-ago frozen foods, and have not realized the current advantages. This may be because students are not aware of shopping and cooking. Some housewives also have some misunderstanding about additives, but they tend to know more about frozen foods than students, and use them effectively for cooking.

The Japanese market for frozen whole meals can be divided according to differing needs. For example, senior couples and singles may prefer a very traditional Japanese

meal, whereas children prefer western style food. Price sensitivity varies as well. A comparison of frozen whole meals for each target market including meals size, meal quality, type of meals, and price are shown in Table 19 below, as discussed by participants. The most potentially profitable segment appears to be adults without children, but the food should be special and quality must be very high.

Table 19. Target Market Positioning and Differentiation of Frozen Whole Meals

target market	meal size	important quality	meal type	price [\$] (a piece)
children - younger	small	nutritious	Western	1.50 - 2.50
children - older	larger	nutritious	Western/Japanese	1.50 - 2.50
students/single (volume-oriented)	larger	taste	Western/Japanese	less than 2.00
students/singles (quality-oriented)	medium	taste	Western/Japanese	can be more than 2.00
general adults	medium	taste	Western/Japanese	3.50 - 4.50
housewives	medium	taste	signature brand	can be more than 15.00
elder couples	medium	taste	Japanese	7.00 - 10.00, can be more than 15.00
seniors	medium - small	dietary, nutritious	Japanese	3.50 - 4.50
special occasions (gift giving)	medium	taste	signature brand	can be more than 15.00

Packaging Factors Affecting Product Acceptance

There are both minor and major differences in packaging factors between student and housewife participants. Minor differences include: secondary package and tray

design. Major differences, including: brand name, recycling ease and disposal issues based on perceptions of packaging materials.

Students did not care much about frozen whole meals' brand name, but housewives tended to look for a brand name. The reason students do not care about brand names is infiltration of private brands. Usually, private brands provides similar quality with less expensive prices. Since the students are low on money, and think private brands taste good enough, they do not care about the brand. The housewives are a little conservative and choose the trusted brand at this point. They mentioned that they do not want to make a mistake choosing "no good" frozen whole meals because it is a *whole* meal; if it tastes bad, they have to get rid of the whole thing.

Both groups like similar boxes such as light or warm colors, and hot-looking, cooked food pictured on a china dish. The only difference is perception of the color. Purple was not liked by the students, but the housewives liked it. The students only think of a package in terms of themselves, and purple is not good for them because it is not a food color. The housewives said that purple might good for their children. Both students and housewives prefer compartmentalized trays.

There is a big difference about recycling ease and disposal issues. Both students and housewives were aware of the recycling issue, but the students do not act on it. The students would dispose of the package even if the package is recyclable. The housewives prefer that a package can be disposed of easily, because recycling could be troublesome.

However, if the package is recyclable, they will try to recycle it. The housewives would like to have something easily disposed of, and also better for the environment.

The students liked plastic trays mainly because they look better. They do not care so much about recycling. The housewives have more concerns about the environment, and so they chose paper-based trays. Even though the housewives like the paper tray, they think the paper trays need some improvement to prevent softness when food is cooked.

There is an inconstancy with the survey result about consumer's perception of general packaged foods (Miyoshi 1990). While consumers seek "less overpackaging", they want innovative (c.e. easy-opening) new packaging. The students simply seek better packaging and the housewives think more about the environment, just like as the survey showed.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the findings from all sessions, several recommendations emerge for how current American frozen whole meal packaging can be adjusted and adapted to the Japanese market. In this section, first of all, a summary of the conclusions is discussed and secondly, several recommendations are suggested. The suggestions are sorted as non-packaging and packaging factors likely to influence product acceptability. Non-packaging factors include price, product characteristics, promotion/advertisement, and place (distribution). Packaging factors include dating issues, information about product and packaging, brand name, recycling ease and disposal issues, tray design, utility and secondary package design.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Based on all the focus group results, student groups who do not like frozen foods and do not use them are representative of a group of people who need to be educated about frozen foods, henceforth refereed to as “Need-To-Be-Educated Consumers” (NTBEC). The housewife groups who know about frozen foods and do use them are

representative of a group of people who are “advanced Japanese consumers”, henceforth referred to as “Advanced Consumers”. The basic tendencies of each group are as follows:

The student groups - “Need-To-Be-Educated Consumers” (NTBEC)

- Their image of frozen foods is very poor. They do not like frozen foods.
- There are negative beliefs about frozen foods: they think frozen foods are filled with preservatives, salt and fat, and are less nutritious.
- Most of the students want low priced frozen whole meals; however, some of them want quality rather than “cheap” foods.
- They tend not to be concerned about recycling packaging. Some people do recycle, but not always.
- They preferred plastic trays. Plastic trays make the product look more appealing.
- They are aware of possible migration problems from the package, such as smell or chemical taste, but are not sure which is safer, plastic or paper trays.
- They said that they prefer green colored packages because they look healthy. A warm color such as red or orange is also good because it tempts the appetite.

The housewife groups - “Advanced Consumers”

- The images for frozen foods are quite positive. They use frozen foods frequently.
- They know about frozen food benefits, and use frozen foods positively to reduce their work and spend more time on other activities.

- The price of frozen whole meals for a family is dependent on the family size: If they have children, the meals should be less expensive: if not, they can be very expensive.
- They do care about the environment, and believe paper is better for it. However, they prefer not to recycle, but instead dispose of packages.
- They prefer paper-based trays. Fiber molded trays look appetizing enough to serve in. Even paperboard trays are acceptable because they cut down overpackaging. Since housewives' stance is for disposal, paper is considered better for incineration.
- None of the housewives feel any guilt for using frozen foods, but many of them may feel guilty if they use frozen whole meals as a regular meal.
- They are aware of possible migration problems from a plastic tray. They think there is some migration from it when they use it in a microwave oven.
- They said that they prefer "light" colors such as white or off-white. Housewives without children preferred some printing on the tray, but mothers think it is not necessary, because it might make the package cost more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, factors likely to influence frozen whole meal acceptability are discussed: non-packaging factors (price, product, promotion, and place) and packaging factors. The recommendations are suggested for the NTBEC and advanced consumers based on the focus group findings.

Non-Packaging Factors Likely to Influence Product Acceptability

Price

Since there are many alternative quick meals in Japan, the usual price of a frozen whole meal should be around \$3.50 to \$4.50, as mentioned in Table 6 (p. 20). If the price range is not reasonable for the quality, the consumers tend to choose existing alternatives such as a box lunch or prepared foods. Otherwise, the frozen whole meal should be something special: such as a meal from a famous restaurant by a famous chef, sometimes given as a gift. It can be more than \$15 a plate. The prices depend on the target market (see Table 19, p. 91).

Product Characteristics

The most important thing for almost all participants is the quality of the food, which is taste. This result is well corresponded with the American survey data about frozen whole meals (Friedman 1994): 91% of the U.S. consumers name “good tasting” for the best attributes of frozen whole meals. The taste of the frozen whole meal should be adjusted for Japanese consumers, regardless of whether it is a Western style or an Oriental style meal. As long as it tastes good, the selection can be either American, Italian, French, Chinese, or any other Ethnic meal; needless to say, tasty Japanese meals would also be fine. It is true that some Italian menus, such as spaghetti and lasagna, are becoming quite popular as frozen meals in Japan now.

The survey (Friedman 1994) also showed other important demands: satisfying serving size, high quality of ingredients and nutrition of the meals. Serving size may be differentiated for each target market (see Table 19, p. 91). For those who need volume of the meal (volume-oriented consumers), serving size should be big enough. Since Japanese housewives also tend to seek high quality foods (Miyoshi 1990) just like Americans, ingredients for frozen whole meals should be high quality. Nutrition of the meals should be good enough, especially for children or senior citizens.

The product selection also depends on the target market, as explained in Table 18 (p. 90). For small children, Western style meals such as a hamburger and french fries would be good. Japanese style meals may also be widely accepted. For seniors, traditional Japanese foods of high quality with special dietary consideration would be suitable. Frozen whole meals may be more popular in the near future, and there may be a big market in Japan.

If the special kind of frozen whole meals would be used as gifts, the selection may be something special, such as signature brand of a famous restaurant's famous chef, namely, Chinese, French, or some kind of special Japanese cuisine. Those frozen meals would be for a family, and the package should be more special, neater and more expensive, with all other concepts, the same as the usual packaging. The gift may be delivered directly to the recipient's home.

Promotion (Advertisement)

As the participants suggested, advertisement is quite valuable. Since the most important thing for the consumers is the taste, the great flavor should be emphasized through commercials and on packages. Considering that consumers seek convenience, ease and speed of preparation should also be emphasized.

Since the NTBEC group has a very poor image of frozen foods in general, it is very important to have some educational information which includes some facts about frozen foods: they can be fresh, nutritious, low salt, low sugar, less fat and preservative free. They can be healthier than any other instant meal. Information about calories is also good to have.

Place (Distribution)

The appropriate store to carry the frozen whole meals for single use might be convenience stores or relatively smaller stores, since singles may not often go to supermarkets. As mentioned before, singles do not cook often, do not have enough storage spaces, and do not buy many frozen whole meals at a time. Since they find the advantages of frozen foods in convenience and speed, small stores, where shopping can also be done quickly, are more appropriate.

For family use, the most appropriate place to carry frozen whole meals is supermarkets and possibly small stores. As described chapter 2, most Japanese

housewives buy frozen foods at supermarkets when they are on sale (*Nikkei Ryutsu Shinbun (Japan)*, 04 March 1995). They buy more than two and keep them in their freezers.

Considering some special frozen whole meals can be merchandise for gift giving, department stores might be one of the best places to sell them since Japanese consumers usually go to department stores to buy gifts.

Packaging Factors Likely To Influence Product Acceptability

The advanced consumers, who have used frozen whole meals in the U.S., notice several problems with the current packaging. However, they could only think of a few recommendations for improvement. New technology may enable improvements to be made. In this section, recommendations for factors likely to influence product acceptability are discussed.

Dating Issues

Japanese consumers seek freshness, therefore dating issues are quite important for them. Even though it is a fact that frozen foods can have more than 18 months of shelf life, consumers want to have the manufactured date and best-if-used-by date. It is natural that they want those dates, considering their shopping habits: many of them go shopping almost every day.

Information about the Product (Shelf life, Additives, and Nutrition)

Consumers are not sure how long frozen foods can be kept in good quality, and tend to use them within a month, in general. Therefore, information about shelf life should be well explained to the consumers.

Japanese consumers pursue “no additive” foods. Actually, frozen foods do not need preservatives since they are kept at a very low temperature; however, the NTBEC and some housewives think frozen foods are filled with preservatives. Therefore, it is good to have as much information as possible on the package to educate the consumers. This education about the additive free quality of the frozen food is quite important.

There is a group of consumers who are conscious about specific dietary factors: low salt, low sugar, and less fat. It is important to develop new products of high dietary quality, but more importantly, the package should have that information. For people who have heart problems or diabetes, special dietary frozen whole meals can be a good meal, just like they are in the U.S. The caloric information is also good to have on the package.

“Nutrition” is one of the most important things when the consumers choose food, especially when housewives choose food for their children. Frozen whole meals can be very nutritious, therefore this nutrition information will help to sell the product.

Information about the Packaging

Consumers are aware of the possible migration problem from the package, even packages which are approved for the market. It is true that there are some migrants from the package, but they are minor and cause no problems for human health (Downes 1997). Therefore, it might be good to have information about the packaging itself, such as cleanness, safety, integrity and the fact that packaging keeps the food quality as it is.

As Table 5 (p. 19) shows, Japanese consumers tend to seek information of the packaging material (Miyoshi 1990). This is because they think of recycling. They want to recycle the packaging material basically, but it is difficult to tell the material difference. Therefore, it is good to have information about the packaging materials and how to recycle them.

Recycling Ease/Disposal Issues

Consumers care about recycling, but truthfully they do not want to do the chore, if possible. They think paper-based packages are good for the environment, and if there are packaging choices for the same product, they choose paper-based packaging. In Japan, a lot of waste is incinerated (OECD 1993), and paper-based packaging is generally considered better than plastic-based packaging by consumers regarding the lower number of calories given off in burning and the smaller volume of toxic exhaust gas while incinerating (Hirayama 1996). There are some packaging recycling laws and regulations in

Japan that control recycling of plastic, especially PET (polyethylene terephthalate). If the packages are made out of PET, they should be recycled with other PET recyclables.

As mentioned in chapter 2, in the U.S., co-polymerized PET was replaced by crystallized PET (homo polymer) for recycling ease in the early 1990's. However, in many cases, PET has been replaced by fiber molded trays to make disposal easy and especially to economize. From this experience in the U.S., it is good to introduce frozen whole meals with paper-based packaging.

The student participants prefer the plastic package because it looks nice and clean. At the same time, they could not tell the difference of material between plastic and paper when they saw the fiber molded tray because both look like china plates. Therefore, it is possible that they might find either material to be highly acceptable.

Tray Design

Consumers do not like some kinds of food to be mixed, and prefer compartmentalized trays. It is good to have compartments for each kind of food, but it is possible not to have them if sauces or pastes are packaged in a separate pouch. Foods that are intended to be crunchy such as fried chicken should be crunchy when they are eaten. There are some techniques that make it possible for crunchy food to be crunchier. Excess water or oil usually makes the food soggy. But a special technique uses a sheet

which absorbs the excess water or oil, and succesor trays can help by browning certain foods. This technique would be helpful for the packaging of crunchy foods.

The color of the tray itself should be “light”, such as white or off-white to make the food look better and give a cleaner image. The color of some U.S. plastic trays is black, and the participants do not like them. Sometimes it is good to have some fancy printing on the tray itself, such as animated characters for kids’ meals. However, some consumers do not want to pay for the fancy package.

If the frozen meal is a single item, such as cooked rice or some kind of pasta, a paperboard box with a paperboard lid could be a good packaging choice. This product should be targeted to the inexpensive range (\$1.50 - \$2.50). Environmentally aware consumers actually like this package because they recognize it as “no-overpackaging” and “environmentally friendly”. However, this simple package may not be suitable for frozen whole meals with some kinds of food items in the medium price range (\$3.50 - \$4.50).

For reasons mentioned above, fiber molded paper trays could be a good choice for the frozen whole meal with some kinds of food items; however, they have one current problem that is perceived by participants: softness of the tray when the foods is cooked. To improve this, manufacturers could strengthen the paper tray by changing the thickness or modifying its composition, or by using an outer box to hold the softened tray. As mentioned before, one participant suggested making a perforation on the box, which is shaped like the bottom of the tray, and using the box as a holder. It would keep the tray in shape, and also make handling easier.

Utility

Consumers seek convenience for the frozen whole meals, and they also seek user-friendly packaging at the same time. The packages should provide “easy-open-ability” and “easy-cooking ability”. For example, the film lid of current U.S. packages is sometimes too weak to peel off, and the preparation instructions are often complex, for example, “remove film from potato, and poke holes over meat with fork”. The lid is usually not designed to be peeled off of single compartments. Improvements are needed to make it “consumer friendly”.

Since the housewives buy frozen food packages more than two at a time, the shape of the package should be suitable for storage. Therefore, it is good to have an outer box. The participants recognize the outer box as “not overpackaging, but necessity” to store neatly in their freezers. However, if there is another way to make the package simple and keep the storage ability good, they do not feel any necessity for the outer box. They want something with a good shape.

Use of “recycled material” or “recyclable material” is always good because most Japanese consumers like environmentally friendly packages. In the U.S., some recycled materials are approved for direct food contact. However, things are not the same in Japan; recycled material can not be used for direct food contact by regulation. As described in chapter 2, plastic is easy to recycle as material, but not as good for incineration because it gives off much more heat than paper when burned. As the focus group participants mentioned, paper is considered good for incineration by Japanese

consumers in Japan (Hirayama 1996); however, new Japanese laws about recycling do not clarify the justification of thermal recycling. Paper trays would be more difficult to recycle as material. Currently, only PET is listed to be recycled, and paper-based packages can be incinerated. Considering the consumers' perception of the package, the paper-based material would be the best choice at this point.

Secondary Package (box) Design/Graphics

A good color for the secondary package would be green for a healthy image, a warm color such as red or orange for tempting the appetite, a relatively lighter color to emphasize the food, or purple for kids to quickly recognize. Hot food should be pictured on a china plate, not on the actual package. However the picture and the actual cooked meals should correspond reasonably; if there is a big difference between the actual foods and the picture, they might not be purchased again.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION

The packaging factors likely to influence product acceptability are illustrated in Table 20 (p. 107). Considering all factors listed in the table, "compartmentalized fiber molded paper trays" would be the best package for the inner tray. The secondary package should be printed with dates, nutrition information, information about material and packaging safety, an appetizing color and a picture of the food. It should also be

truly easy to open and made with recycled or recyclable material. Some improvements to the inner tray itself and the lid should be implemented.

Table 20. Packaging Factors Likely to Influence Product Acceptability

factors	primary package (inner tray)	secondary package
positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - compartmentalized tray for each items - material: paper - color: bright (white) - fancy printing, occasionally - hard/stiff - recyclable, recycled/disposal ease - easy-open lid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - date (manufactured, best-if-used-by) - information for nutrition - dietary information (low salt, fat) - information about packaging - color: green, light, warm (red, orange) - picture: cooked, hot-looking on china - easy opening - recyclable, recycled/disposal ease
negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mixed foods (not compartmentalized) - color: black - softness of tray when cooked - difficult to dispose of (plastic) - difficulty of opening lid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no date - no information for nutrition - no dietary information (low salt, fat) - no information about packaging - color: white (looks cheap), black (not food color) - picture: raw, on the actual package - difficulty of opening - recyclable, recycled/disposal ease

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research, focus groups are used for qualitative measurements as the principal source of data collection. Surveys are recommended to make the qualitative data quantitative. This research was done with people currently living in the U.S. If there is a need to get quantitative data from the experienced consumers, surveys in the U.S. are recommended. Surveys in Japan may also provide more accurate representations of current consumer perceptions.

MISCELLANEOUS RELATED CONSIDERATIONS

Considering consumer perceptions explored in this research, perceptions about the packaging of prepared salad and retort foods are relevant for further research.

Salads are a popular menu item in Japan and there are many kinds of them, just like in the U.S. However, typical prepared salad packages with a shelf life as long as two weeks are well used in the U.S., but are not so popular in Japan. Japanese salad packages' shelf life is only one or two days. Since Japanese consumers seek convenient foods just like American consumers, it is good to have prepared salad packages. Many stores that deal with prepared foods and box lunches have "prepared salad", but the shelf life is usually minimal. In the U.S., the two week shelf life of prepared salad packages make them very popular. Therefore, the development of prepared salad packaging is recommended.

Although retort packaging is quite popular in Japan, the package is not so consumer friendly. The package is usually a pouch, laminated with an aluminum foil. Therefore, it can not be used in microwave ovens and can not be served in its original package. To develop a new package which can be used as a serving plate is quite important for the Japanese consumers since they seek convenient packaging.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Participant Profile

participant number	group number	male	female	single	married	child	years in the U.S.	age
1	1	x		x			6 months	23
2		x		x			2	26
3			x	x			2.5	26
4			x		x		1.5	28
5			x	x			1.5	26
6		x		x			7 months	32
7		x		x			3	23
8			x	x			1.5	25
9			x	x			2 months	25
10		x		x			1.5	24
11			x	x			3.5	30
12		x			x	x	5	32
13	2		x	x			6 months	21
14			x	x			1.5	23
15			x	x			2	22
16			x	x			3	23
17			x	x			3	23
18	3		x		x		2.5	50+
19			x		x		34	60+
20			x		x		2.5	40
21			x		x		1	50+
22			x		x		31	50+
23			x		x		10	50+
24			x		x		10	20+
25			x		x		1.5	30+
26			x		x		3 months	30
27			x		x		5	60
28			x		x		2	50
29	4		x		x	x	2	35
30			x		x	x	1	30+
31			x		x	x	3	40+
32			x		x	x	2.5	30+
33			x		x	x	2	30+
34			x		x	x	2	30+
35			x		x	x	1	40
36			x		x	x	3.5	30+
37			x		x	x	2	40+
38			x		x	x	5	30+
39			x		x	x	2.5	40+
total	-	6	33	15	24	12	-	-

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUPS: DISCUSSION OUTLINES

Perceptions of Frozen Food Packaging by Japanese Consumers

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

What is a focus group?

A focus group is a discussion where a company tries to get opinions of consumers, using their own words, ideas, images and thoughts, about new products. Many companies are doing focus groups now to get direct consumer ideas about new products, or existing products.

First of all, please speak one at a time, and clearly, because we are tape-recording this to help me make a report of this session, and I don't want miss any word of yours. The data will be confidential.

What we are going to discuss today is,

about general characteristics or factors that help you choose which food you buy. And specifically, we are going to examine new frozen food packages. Several new frozen foods, and frozen food package choices that Japanese people will have in Japan.

Finally, we are going to actually look at some packages and we are going to get your reaction. What do you like or dislike about this package? What about the package will make you more likely or less likely to buy it? What suggestion would you have before manufacture of this product for sale?

Do any of you have any questions?

Let's start the discussion. First of all, would you please introduce yourselves. Tell me your first name, and something about yourself. Your major, how long have you been in the U.S. Where do you live in now? Something about your family food habits. Who does most of the grocery shopping? Who does the cooking? (1) when you were in Japan, (2) when you go back to Japan.

The frozen food we are going to discuss is "frozen dinner", also called "TV dinner" in the U.S., which is a whole meal, frozen, such as fried chicken and mashed potatoes, and

vegetable mix, on one plate. You can just microwave it, and it's ready. It takes about 5 minutes for making a dinner.

One other thing. If you agree with someone's opinion, please say so. If you are disagree, say so, please. Don't hesitate to disagree.

I. General Food Purchase Discussion

- Think about buying food to cook in your home or apartment here in the U.S. What are the key things that impact your choices?

Price

appeal / selection of favorite foods

ease of preparation

brand identification / preference

advertisements / promotional efforts

packaging

- In Japan, when purchasing food, who is primarily responsible for deciding what to buy?

- What are the key things that impact what they choose?

Price

appeal / selection of favorite foods

product attributes (freshness, storage, portion size..)

ease of preparation

brand identification / preference

advertisements / promotional efforts

packaging

disposability / recyclability

- Why is it that the mother / wife (or you) purchases different food products in Japan than in the U.S.?

customs / tradition to shop more often, use fresh foods

lack of refrigeration / freezer space.... Storage space

different store types / grocery ... vendor options

II. Frozen Foods Specific Content Discussion

General Frozen Foods Questions;

- Initial thoughts; Increasingly in Japan grocery stores and food departments are offering frozen microwavable food products.

- What comes to mind when you think of frozen foods?
Have you thought about frozen foods?
What do you think of frozen foods?
- Please tell me what kind of “**image**” you have for frozen food?
- If you want to buy frozen food, what do you buy?
- Do you remember the last time you bought frozen foods,
/ Have you ever used frozen foods, and what were they?
/ Why did you buy it?
- What kind of stuff is there **in your freezer** (suppose you have it)?
How about your mom’s freezer?
- Do you know, recently, in Japan, frozen foods are getting popular, and some new frozen food products are coming out, such as cup rice, spaghetti deep fried shrimp, croquette, pork cutlet? / If you were in Japan, **how likely** would you be to buy these?
- Are these products likely to sell? Why or Why not?

III. Frozen Whole Meal General Questions;

We are going to focus on “**frozen whole meals**”, frozen whole meal foods.

- Have you ever seen them? Have you ever bought them? What did you think?
- **Who** do you think is going to buy them? / Who will be the consumer?
- Where (**what kind of store**) do you think this whole frozen meal could be bought?
Where do you think you see this? (large department stores, convenience stores, local grocers,)
- When (**what occasion**) do you think this whole frozen meal could be bought?
- What kind of selections (**menu**) are good for the whole frozen meals?
- **Why** do you think you (or someone else) would buy them?
- **How often** are you likely to buy them?
- **How many packages** of frozen food meals would you buy **at one time**?
- How long do they keep until they must be used? (**Storage**)

- How much (**price**) is suitable for this kind of product?
- What kind of **serving (for lunch, snacks, dinner) size** is good for this?
- What suppliers (food processing companies; **brands**) do you think should sell these products..... or will sell them.....impact?
Frozen food manufacturer; Ajinomoto, Nichirei, Nisshin, Katokichi, House, Otsuka
- What will make you buy them? / Where do you expect the **ads**?
ads on TV, news paper, see at store, friends...

IV. Frozen Whole Meal Packaging Questions;

We will discuss the importance of packaging of frozen food products
(no samples; unaided)

- What should the packaging be like?
visually, structurally, information noted...
shape / structure / ease of storage
recyclable (noted by symbol... words) / disposal directions
price
contents information (weight, fat, calories, salt, ingredients
cooking directions
storage directions / storage reliability
'sell-by' date / 'use-by' date
pictures of food ...cooked, uncooked, served, suggestions for accompaniments...
ease of opening
interior package ...function / form
- What kind **material** of packages do you like?
paper-based / plastic?
primary only / secondary?
Don't care!
- Do you **care** about recycling? / Do you think it is important?
law / personal / deposit

(package viewing / handling comments; pull out frozen food packages)

- **First impression?**
- Are you going to try it?
Do the packages meet your needs.... what is good or bad?
outer packaging; appeal, information provided, function, form
inner packaging; form and function

- What will be the **bad thing** for selling the frozen whole meal?
appealing, recycling, size, structure, easy-to-open, direction (how to cook), shelf life, date, cost (price)
- What **is the most important thing** a package should have?
long shelf life, food safety, better taste, easy to dispose,
easy to recycling, easy to open, easy to store
- What **kind of package** do you think is good **for the environment**?
paper-based / plastic / glass / steel can / aluminum can / don't care
- What needs to be different if these packages are to be sold in Japan? What **suggestions** do you have?
- What if there are two frozen foods, one package is better, but by a generic brand, and the other package is not good, but by a preferred brand, which do you choose? and why? -
How would you expect **others** to respond?
father / uncle
boyfriend
mother / aunt
girl friend
grandmother
grandfather
more rural friends or relatives
more urban friends or relatives
more traditional friends or relatives (conservative?)
more modern friends or relatives (liberal / forward thinking)
- Will you be embarrassed if someone sees a frozen whole meal in your freezer, or seen you eating one?

Show each frozen food package one by one, and ask some questions about each of the packages,

- The first impression; What do you think of this packaging?
- Do you consider it "easy-to-open"?
- The way it is packaged; primary and secondary
- material used for the tray; plastic or paper
- tray compartment; food mixed, or separated
- package size
- outer packaging design
picture

color

- other function: don't get soggy
- nutrition
- recyclability / disposability
- Would you eat out of this tray or not?

Packaging Types;

1. paperboard, lidded tray (primary packaging only)
2. paperboard, lidded tray, easy-to-open (primary packaging only)
3. paper folding tray and a paperboard sleeve
4. paper folding compartmentalized tray and a box
5. fiber molded compartmentalized tray and a box
6. CPET tray and a box
7. CPET compartmentalized tray and a box

X. Suggesting Questions;

- What is the most important thing when you buy it?
- What stops you from buying this kind of frozen meal?
selection, taste, price, prefer fresh foods
- What will help to sell frozen whole meals?
Do you have any suggestions to help make these products more appealing and to increase sales?

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Number 1 - Transcription: MSU Students

Moderator 1: Thank you for coming today. I really appreciate you coming. Could you sign-in, please? Why we are getting together today is to do a “focus group.” Focus group is a discussion where a company or some groups try to get an opinion of a consumer using their own words, ideas, images, thoughts, about a new products. Many companies are doing focus groups now, to get direct consumer ideas about new products or existing products. Some things about focus groups: please speak one at a time, and clearly, because we are tape-recording to help me to write a report of this session, and because I’m doing master’s thesis with this focus group, so, please speak louder, and clearly. And, what we are going to discuss today is about general characteristics or factors that help you choose which food you buy. And specifically, we are going to examine new frozen food and frozen food package. Several new frozen foods, and new frozen food packages, choices that Japanese people will have in Japan. Finally, we are going to actually look at some packages and we are going to get your reaction. What do you like or dislike about this package? What about the package will make you more likely or less likely to buy it? What suggestion would you have before the manufacture of this product to be sold. Do you have any questions?

Let’s start the discussion. First of all, would you please introduce yourselves. Tell me your name, something about yourself like your major, how long you have been here in the United States, and where you live now. Something about your family food habits: like who does most of the grocery shopping or who cooks.

Hi, my name is _____, I major in Parks and Recreation Resources, and I live in Owen Hall, I have been here for two years.

Moderator: Food habits? When you were in Japan, who did the grocery shopping?

My mother did shopping, and cooked for us.

My name is _____. I’m usually called _____, so I prefer that. I major in counseling in the master’s program, College of Education. I’ve been here for six months. And food habits? Grocery shopping? My mother used to do, and she cooked, too, so she decides what to buy, she decides what to cook.

Hi, my name is _____, I live in Owen, too. I've been here one and a half years, and food habits? OK, my mother was living away from home when I was in Japan, so I did grocery shopping during the week, and my mother did the grocery shopping on weekends. I cooked during the week, my mother cooked during the weekend. Sometimes we go grocery shopping together, although my father will do the grocery shopping if we tell him what to buy.

Everyone: (laughter)

My name is _____, and I've lived in the US for three years. My major is accounting. My mother does the cooking and grocery shopping usually, but sometimes my father does it, too. His cooking style is very different.

Moderator 2: *Good morning. What (Moderator 1) had said was we are really discussing frozen foods, in general, and then the packaging of some frozen foods more specifically. He asked you to introduce yourselves, tell what your major is, how long you have been in the United States, who buys the food when you were home in Japan, who buys and cooks it for the most part.*

OK. My name is _____, I just started this semester. My major is Child development. In Japan, my mom always cooks.

Moderator 2: *And you are happy about that? I see your smile! That's a good thing?*

How do you know that! ...OK.

I'm also from Japan, I'm just taking just English course, but I'm trying to get in to English major to be a teacher. In Japan, my mother used to buy foods, but these days, my sister helps my mother, because mother doesn't know new foods.

Moderator 2: *How long did you say you have been here?*

I just started this semester.

Moderator 2: *OK, it's not very long.*

Moderator 1: *About one month?*

Yes.

My name is _____, Please call me _____. I've been here about one and a half years, and my major is food industry management. I'm very interested in this discussion, because

it's about my major. Usually, I'm used to living alone, so I had to cook. But, actually, I like cooking.

Moderator 1: *You are living in Owen hall, right?*

Oh, yes.

Moderator 1: *Who did the grocery shopping in Japan?*

I did.

Supervisor: *I'm _____, and I'm working with (Moderator 1), and a professor here in the School of Packaging. I've been here for a long time, and my husband does all the cooking and all the shopping. Great deal.*

Everyone: (laughter)

Supervisor: *If you can't have your mother, it's the next best thing.*

Moderator 2: *I'm (Moderator 2), I'm also assisting (Moderator 1) on this project. I have a graduate degree, as well, in merchandising management from MSU. In my family, whoever can cooks. We all shop, we all cook, we eat out often.*

My name is _____, and my husband is a Ph.D. student of MSU, and I have no major. So, my major is housewife! In Japan, my mother did everything, cooking and shopping. But when I lived alone, I also did everything. I live in Spartan Village now, and I've been here for one and a half year.

Supervisor: *And you do all cooking for your husband?*

Yes.

Hi, my name is _____. I'm here for two and a half years. I'm a journalism major, master student. I'm from Osaka, but at home, my mother cooks. And she buys foods mostly from Co-op, she ask them to deliver, also she goes to the shop. My father has a physical problem, he has a problem of heart disease. So, we need to try to reduce salt.

My name is _____, I've been here for seven months. I'm an engineer of brewing company. In Japan, I never cooked. I don't like to cook. But it is difficult to live here without cooking, so I sometimes cook frozen foods.

(next participant coming in)

Moderator 1: *Tell me about your name, and your major, how long you have been here. We are talking about frozen food today, so general food habits, like who does grocery shopping, cooking.*

OK. My name is _____, and I've been here for six years. Who cooks? My wife does.

Moderator 1: *You live in apartments?*

Yes.

Moderator 2: *What did you say you are studying?*

Oh, I didn't say anything. I major in Education.

(another person coming in)

(apologizing in Japanese) Sumimasen...Osokunatte.

Moderator 2: *It's not a nice day, so you have a good excuses...trying to find parking. We are just asking everyone to introduce themselves, to note how long you have been in the United States, what you study, when you were home in Japan, who does the shopping for food, and who does the cooking.*

OK. My name is _____, and this is my fourth year in the States. I'm Linguistics major. When I was in Japan, I, myself shopped, and I do cook.

Moderator 2: *In Japan, you do cook as well?*

Yes.

Moderator 1: *Let's get started on the discussion.*

Moderator 2: *Anyone is welcome to take the food and drink over there, get up and take a break at any point, just help yourselves.*

Moderator 1: *Please. The first thing we are going to discuss is about general food purchase decision. So, think about buying food to cook in your home or apartment here in the United States. What are the key things that impact your choices?*

Moderator 2: *Why do you choose what you choose when you go food shopping?*

Price!

Moderator 2: OK

Freshness

Moderator 2: OK. Let's talk about freshness. What is freshness? How can you tell it's fresh? You know what I mean? What is fresh?

The manufacturing of it and...

Moderator 2: So, canned things are fresh to you? If it's in a can or jar can it be fresh? Is that what you think is fresh?

I don't think canned food is considered fresh.

You can't preserve.

I was thinking more like vegetables or some kind of stuff.

Moderator 2: It's fresh. It's never been packaged? You mentioned price. For others of you is that important?

yes, (one person looked in disagreement)

Moderator 1: So, why do you think price is not important for you?

Well, I think it's the way I have been brought up. Our family didn't really care that much about prices, as long as we could afford it, all we care about more quality. And usually, better quality product is more expensive.

Moderator 2: You have mentioned something else we didn't really talk about when (Moderator 1) was putting together this outline, that is special dietary need. You said your father like less salt. Does anyone else, does that matter at all? You look for special things about the food product themselves. Either how much fat, or salt or other things?

Not necessarily very special, but considering my diet, I don't like too much salt used product and also I don't like too much fat. So, personally I do look for low fat, and low salt.

Moderator 2: Usually the same when you were in Japan? Or...

Yes, because my mother cooked, and I did cook by myself. I did not use too much salt myself. So when I do buy a product that is already made, like frozen food, I do look for the amount of salt in them.

Moderator 2: Other comments? Things you look for.

I avoid, we avoid artificial flavors and chemicals.

Moderator 1: Do you agree with that?

Everyone: Uh-h

Moderator 1: Most of all. and preservatives, maybe?

Everyone: Yeah.

Moderator 2: Any other different things?

I don't like too much sugar.

Moderator 2: Any people disagree? ...

I like something sweet, but I check for low fat.

I never care about low fat, when I was in Japan, but...

Moderator 2: Will you, when you go back? Would that be something else?

Well, the thing is we can't get this many low fat as you can get here in Japan, so I don't think I'll care, I don't have any choice to care about.

Moderator 1: There is very few stuff, I mean, low fat stuff.

I don't know everybody else does.

Moderator 2: Well, we talked about price, that's important for some of you, and talked about some special dietary needs, whether it's salt or sugar or low fat. What else-some other things? For instance, how important is it? How easy to cook? Whether it's something takes a long time, or it's simple to prepare. Does that matter much? Does any of you think about that?

I like convenience.

Moderator 2: Convenience? What do you look for?

I usually buy ready to cook food, just fry or... something like a Chinese fried rice. I bought a ready to eat food a lot.

Moderator 2: Why?

Why? Fast and relatively cheap.

Moderator 1: What kind of ready-to-eat food stuff, like frozen foods or...?

Stir fry. First of all, when we get together.

Supervisor: Is it frozen?

I think it's frozen and you mean like the style, yeah, frozen. It's just packaged cold and refrigerated.

Moderator 2: For others of you. How important is convenience? How quickly you can cook something. Does that matter?

Doesn't matter.

Moderator 2: Doesn't matter. You don't get a place on time.

It depends on how much I have to cook. When I'm busy, I rarely go for eating stuff, maybe stir fried or maybe some of the pre-cooked foods, but if I have a lot of time, I start from scratch.

Moderator 2: Do you think things will be different when you go back to Japan?

Depends on who the question is for.

Moderator 2: For yourself. When you get back there, Do you think you'll be busier, or less busy. And will it be more or less important?

For me, my wife is a full-time housekeeper, so in this case, you can spend much more time for cooking... I don't think I have much time to spend for cooking.

Moderator 2: When you go back to Japan, will she work outside of the home?

Well, I don't know.

Everyone: (laughter)

Moderator 2: *Do you hope she does?*

If she does, she won't be able to spend much time for cooking, so in this case, she prefer ready-to-cook food, but she's in the same position, she isn't here, but she prefers cooking from scratch.

Moderator 2: *Anyone else?*

Right now, I live in Owen Hall. Actually, I used to cook by myself, and when I go back to Japan, I would cook by myself again. By buying fresh vegetables.

Moderator 2: *Even if you get married?*

Ah. Yes. To me, it really doesn't matter if I'm married or not. And, if I do get married, I'm not expecting my wife to be fully in the house.

Moderator 2: *Why don't we talk about that. Because I think almost everyone in here said your mothers bought and cooked the foods in your home. It was the same thing for me growing up, but do you expect to be the same? A lot of thing are changing, or maybe your life style would be different where you grew up. Do you think it will be the same? When you go home?*

I think the social situation is changing, so... I expect many mothers go to work, so they want to stay at home.

Moderator 2: *But you still expect them to cook and buy all the food?*

Maybe.

Everyone: (laughter)

Moderator 2: *Because it doesn't mean just because they go to work... you know, challenged to do, more than share... You shaking your head, what do you think?*

Well, ...I ever get married, I expect my husband to cook. I want to be able to work. I've seen my brother do work and cooking, so.. it's just overworking.

Supervisor: *How long do they usually spend cooking for a main meal dinner?*

Well, I guess it really depends on the family. My family, my mother was working, I think she preferred to spend as little time as possible. By the time she gets home, it was like nine or ten in the evening, so...

Moderator 2: *Others of you? That's a good question. How long does your mother cook?*

My mother was working also, so she did between work and work...

Moderator 2: *Your father never cooked?*

He cooked, if she is very busy or I and my sister little child, he cooked. We had a grandmother, so she need more soft food.

Moderator 1: *So, how about you right now?*

Me? Oh...One hour? For dinner, one hour.

Moderator 2: *Other comments?*

About the same. One hour.

About one hour.

Moderator 2: *How about any of you? Do you expect your husbands to help to cook? Do you think you will be doing it at all when you get back?*

I just want to share, you know, when I'm busy.

Moderator 2: *Do you think it will happen?*

Yes, when I get married. If I were busy, so.. I want my husband to cook and if he's busy, I will cook.

Moderator 2: *Do you think there are many men you can find who will do that?*

In Japan, it is difficult.

Everyone: (laughter)

Moderator 2: *I know what you would like, but...*

I think same thing. I want my husband to help me, and if he is busy, I can cook. I also think [inaudible] help me cook.

I don't mind cooking at all, but I will expect husband to do dishes.

Moderator 2: *Okay (laughter). I would rather cook.*

Everyone: (laughter)

Moderator 2: *Any other comments?*

My father always does the dishes, he doesn't cook at all, but he always did the dishes.

My father likes cooking, but he hates to do the dishes.

Supervisor: *I don't think it's fair the person gets all of the dishes...they should have some share in cleaning them up.*

Moderator 2: *So we talked about some other things, we talked about how long it takes to cook, we talked about how healthy the food products are. What other some things make a difference? For instance, one thing I have learned that I didn't know this, (Moderator 1) said to him it's important for him whether it's recyclable, or not, or how easy to dispose of. Does that matter to you all, and if so, why does that matter?*

Supervisor: *The packages.*

Moderator 2: *Does that make a difference? Why?*

Yes. Why don't like to buy ready-made food, like when they are wrapped with foils, ... usually, people just through it away in a garbage.

Moderator 2: *Probably, especially in Owen hall or something?*

Oh, yes, I mean, they combined everything from light bulbs to fresh foods, everything. I personally don't like it. I think we should recycle whatever we can.

Moderator 1: *Who else agrees with that or disagrees?*

Moderator 2: *Is it even something you look at? I mean, of the many different things, why you choose one product, is one of the things that makes a difference you would choose this product over another product? Whether you can recycle the package or not?*

Just one thing, I do not like to pay too much for packaging, so I ask to pay more for food.

Moderator 2: *But, how do you know that? You know what I mean? If it's, you have a package of frozen food, and whole package is three dollars, they don't tell you, okay, fifty cents of this is for packaging, you know. What gives you a sense?*

You can compare with other products in other stores.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Does that matter about recycling?*

Supervisor: *Is there a lot of recycling in Japan?*

Oh, yes.

Depends on the cities, though.

Moderator 2: *Is it something, do you think your mother looked at it, if your mother, for most part, your mother choosing most of the food products. You haven't said much here, does it matter? Do you care?*

Well, just a little.

Moderator 2: *So, it's one of the things, not a big thing. How about when you were in Japan?*

In Japan, well, my mother did all.

Moderator 2: *Do you think she cared?*

Yes. I think so. She sometimes ignores it.

Moderator 2: *You said it was really important for you, recycling. You have to in your community back in Japan?*

I think people much more aware of recycling in Japan.

Moderator 2: *Will you all do that? Go to that much effort when you get back to Japan for your children?*

Well, one thing is that a lot school do have school lunches.

Moderator 2: *But for those of you who are going to go back, will you accept that much effort that your mothers did for you? It may be working. I assume many of you are in graduate school, my guess is that you are assuming that you will going back and be employed for most of you. Will you look for different things in the foods than what your mothers looked for you? Will you take that much time? Do you understand my question? You're not sure? If you have choices, will you take that much time, if you have choices that will be quicker?*

Should be quicker.

Moderator 2: *Should be quicker. It sounds like a lot of work.*

Well, if I had choices, I would prefer to cook myself because [inaudible], but if I do not have time, I don't think I have any choice and I think I would go to the frozen foods, except for salt and fat.

Moderator 2: *You said your perception is that you think much of the frozen food is salt or fatty. What are your other perceptions of the frozen foods that are out there? Are they as good, bad or worse, why?*

Not fresh.

Moderator 2: *Not fresh.*

Unhealthy.

Moderator 2: *Unhealthy.*

Not as much as fresh.

Moderator 2: *That's three important things and lets talk about it. First, not fresh, do you agree or disagree and, if so, why? Are frozen foods as fresh? As fresh tasting.*

Not fresh tasting.

Moderator 2: *Does it matter?*

The difference between fresh frozen food and the other food is that it's already cooked, so you can keep it stored in freezer for long time, the perception is that people just would keep it in the freezer for a long time and they don't care whether it's fresh or not.

Moderator 2: *But, does it still taste fresh?*

Nah, I don't think it does.

When you are asking the question, does it mean that does it taste like you made it out of fresh vegetables?

Moderator 2: *Yes. Does it?*

No, to me it doesn't. Like frozen mixed vegetables and mixed vegetables is completely different.

Moderator 2: *What else did we say over here? We had some other things, we had fresh, unhealthy. Are frozen products—her perception is that frozen food products aren't as healthy.*

They do not use preservatives?

Moderator 2: *They do not.*

I think that's all right. I put, like when I cook Korean rice or soup, I prepare hamburger, I put them in the refrigerator and keep them. I've heard that that's all right to do that. I don't think you can...

Moderator 2: *So, sometimes they can be as healthy, depends on what they do. Others of you, do you perceive frozen food products, or to what degree do you perceive them as not as healthy?*

My perception is that frozen foods, most of the time, they use lots of salt and lots of taste there, so I think that's what makes me feel like they have too much salt in it, too much everything.

Supervisor: *It sounds to me like the kind of frozen foods that you are mostly thinking about are something that you cook, you stir fry it or something like that rather than the kind of American frozen food that you stick in the microwave and it's all ready. Is that the case? Do you have many totally made meals that are frozen.*

I think that's the point she cleared out, like the frozen foods we have is not like a set of dinner that you just put in the microwave, no, the frozen food we have and, like she said, is like one item like six of fried dumplings or mixed vegetables, bag of mixed vegetables and...

Moderator 2: *And they are often raw.*

Yes, something that you will have to combine yourself and prepare. I'm not sure, we do have ready dishes like in United States that you just put in the microwave, but not sure about that now.

Those kinds are not frozen, they are on a regular shelf like Lasagna and stuff that you just stick in the oven and bake for like five minutes, those are on the regular shelf.

Moderator 2: *Why?*

They don't make it frozen I guess.

Moderator 2: *Why? Why don't you think there are more frozen—the Japanese society is at least or more developed than about anywhere else in the world, I mean, we're not talking about you know India or some places here that...*

I guess they don't need to have it frozen because they—I don't really know about the technology, but they pack it real well, like they let the air out and stuff, so it...

Moderator 2: *It still can't last as long, right?*

It lasts about a year.

Moderator 2: *Oh, is that right?*

Yes...

And another point is that we grocery shopping more often than people in the United States, like we go twice or three times a week...

Moderator 2: *Is that a good thing or bad thing and will that continue?*

For me it stinks(?), because I can buy fresh things...

Moderator 2: *So you shop often?*

If I go to the supermarket once a week, I have to buy more prepared food.

Moderator 2: *Sure. So, how often do you go? Or when you are home, how often do you think, when you are back in Japan?*

Three or four times a week. Everyday, I think after work, I go to supermarket, then go home.

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Well, your mom did that. Will you do that? Does your mom work outside of the home?*

She is housewife.

Moderator 2: *Okay, if you are working full time, how often will you shop and how will that affect what you buy?*

Maybe if would get big refrig and I will keep longer and...

Moderator 2: *Shop less often?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Okay. What will you buy differently because of that? I mean, if you are only shopping once a week or...*

Once a week, yeah.

Even if more mothers stop working, but the station will be same in Japan because grocery shop in Japan will be—its located near the houses, that's why it's more probable to buy grocery than in the States.

My mother work full time, but she shop every day.

Moderator 2: *I cannot imagine... (laughter).*

In Japan, supermarket is not like Meijer. We have to drive many minutes, just ten minutes to walk, ten minutes by bike.

It's just grocery store is on the way back home, so you usually you can stop by.

In most of the Japanese supermarkets, there's no cart, well, there's a cart, but you can use it just inside the building, you cannot take it outside. That's why I often go to shopping with my mother, she cannot carry so many things, so I just help them.

Moderator 2: *Will you be happy with that or are you going to complain. You've been here in the United States, you've had some other options, you're going to be home, you're going to be busy, as consumers, will you want different things?*

I don't think there's a choice because we don't have parking lots near the grocery stores, we can't use the cars in the first place.

Moderator 2: *Will you want—many of you have seen different frozen foods, whole frozen dinners and things like that, is that something you will be interested in? Why or not? What would you look for, I mean, now you said most of the frozen foods are individual food products. They are often not cooked, so you have to cook the dumplings, put them in oil or do whatever, will you hope to find on the market when*

you get back to Japan, would you want—would you request, I mean, whether or not you make the effort—would you want to request whole dinner things?

Personally I would because I'm not familiar with the taste that they have on the whole dinner sets that we have in the United States and so I think, I'm not planning to go grocery shopping every day though, but...

Moderator 2: Well that's an important thing—how many of you have eaten—do you know what we are talking about, the whole completed dinner, where you maybe get a vegetable, maybe fried rice and a desert or something like that. How many of you have experienced that in the United States? On tape, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, the majority of the group. When you get back to Japan, you will start seeing some products like that, what will you except to see?

We don't have to buy whole frozen like chicken dinner. We just go to what we call the hot lunch(??), so they can buy some fresh food, entire food, so I don't think they [inaudible]

Moderator 1: I think so. It's like a prepared box with different items in it, but it's fast, you walk in there and it's all done and you have different choices and it's hot.

It's right there, they just make it.

Moderator 2: Does everyone have that option, I mean, are there lots of those?

Yes.

Yes.

That is also considered to be unhealthy, but I don't think the frozen foods can beat that.

Moderator 2: Are they open all the time, are they really convenient? For instance, I know many people to stereotype in Japan work wild hours, you know, you have this stereotype, you take two hours on train into Tokyo, you work ten hours, you know, you get home at midnight. I don't know if it's true or not, but that's what I think sometimes. You mentioned that your mother comes home at nine o'clock at night, well, I don't know very many people in the United States that work twelve hour days. Some people, you know, when you come at nine o'clock or twelve o'clock, can you go to those lunch boxes? Then what are your choices?

Convenience stores. They have microwave ready...

They are open 24 hours.

If you work until nine o'clock, I think you will have dinner on the way to your house.

Right.

Moderator 2: *No midnight snacks, okay. (Moderator 1) wants to show us some packages, but before we see them, what will you expect? There are going to be more choices probably on the Japanese market probably in the next couple years, and that is surprising to many of you, with whole frozen food dinners, before you see them, what will you expect to see and how do you think they will be received when they are in Japan? If they started offering putting whole TV dinners in stores, what would people think? What would you think? What would your mothers think?*

I would think that some people—well some people think that to cook is a very noble job and to prepare a TV dinner is sort of not doing their job as a housewife or mother.

Moderator 2: *Let's talk about that. What do you think? What were you going to say? You understand? Do you agree? Is it true.*

I think cooking is an art.

Moderator 2: *Do you think that as much as your mother thinks that? Or your grandmother? Again, other comments about that. Is it noble? Are you going to be a noble cook?*

My mom and my grandma thinks that. Yeah, I like cooking, but kind of noble. Not so much.

Moderator 2: *Who are you convincing? Why don't you think it's quite as important to you?*

Because, we have many options, cooking is not all there is in life.

Moderator 2: *There are other things in your life? Okay, other comments?*

If I cook myself, I can consider my family's health, but if I buy something and cook, well not cook, but just cooking in microwave, I don't know how much salt you need and what kind of preserve something...

Moderator 2: *Sure, preservatives.*

Especially if you have a child, you really have to care about the health of the child.

Moderator 2: *You haven't said much here. What do you think about things that we are talking about?*

Oh yeah.

Moderator 2: *Would you be interested in frozen foods? Why or why not?*

One of the most important things to choose frozen food, if I'm not [inaudible] frozen food, which company does it make, yeah, because it is a food, so we have to eat it.

Moderator 2: *(Moderator 1), do you want to talk about that? He's talking about which company, brand.*

[inaudible Japanese brand name] [inaudible Japanese brand name]

Moderator 2: *These are brands? These are good brands or bad brands or just any brand? Just famous brands?*

[sounds like words in Japanese and then there is a lot of laughter]

Moderator 2: *How much difference does it make? For instance, in the United States, if I see something that says from Budget Gourmet, I assume it's cheaper food, but then if I see it's—I don't know—Swanson or something like that or Stouffer or whatever and I think it's different it says Lean Cuisine, you know, whatever the brand is. Talk to me about it. What brands would you expect to be—hold more interest for you or less interest and why does that matter? Are the brands better or worse or just they are different brands that you know? I mean, are some of those that you said you prefer those specific brands or does it make any difference?*

I don't prefer any and that's because I don't think I'm very much into frozen foods in the first place, but...

Moderator 2: *Are those frozen food brands that you said or just food brands?*

Frozen food.

It's just that if you are familiar to the brand itself, maybe I mean, you're not taking very much chances, you know what you are expecting, you know what to expect is what I mean and I think that it's not like you are considering one food, like if you were comparing lasagna made by [inaudible Japanese brand name] or [inaudible Japanese brand name] I'm not so many would compare those, like cook it at the same time and just try them both and see which one tastes better or not. I think they just pick by the brand or the, well actually, maybe the package to myself, how beautiful the picture is...

Moderator 2: *And we will talk about that in just a second.*

Maybe the price would differ from brands then...

[someone indicates quietly that they have to leave]

Supervisor: *Thank you for coming*

Moderator 2: *Any other comments about brands or things? Yes.*

I think in Japan private letter is very difficult...

Moderator 2: *Like from [inaudible] [inaudible] or something from a department store up here, what do you mean?*

I mean like such as [inaudible] [inaudible] [inaudible] the big money produced their own product, like Meijers', store brands...

Moderator 2: *And is that better or worse? Or just happening.*

Same that's around, but it's cheaper.

Moderator 2: *But are they as good? Do you know what I mean? Are you as comfortable buying at Meijer, Meijers' brand bread as whatever...*

Very good.

Moderator 2: *I'm not sure how much of an endorsement that is. Like you were worried about health, would you be as comfortable buying a brand name, would you think that was healthier and better than no brand or a store brand?*

I have no notice for that [inaudible].

Moderator 2: *Did you have a comment?*

I think my choice of product is tied with television advertising and when I was in class, they would say an advertisement and I might think, oh, the food must taste good and then, well, usually, this is not good food.

Moderator 2: *It was a good ad, but it wasn't good food. (Moderator 1), you wanted to ask them about advertisements, why, you know, what did they think. Any comments? Do you believe the ads? What do you look for in the ads? Any of you?*

Like if it's food, if it was on television, I would look for how good it looks or how tasty it appears. I look for they are using this much meat and this much vegetables, it's not healthy or is it healthy or I mean I won't look for salt or anything in the television advertisement. I just look for how it looks.

Moderator 2: *I think you mentioned a couple of minutes ago and we are going to turn the discussion in I will really let (Moderator 1) take over from here, packaging itself. You had said packaging to you is important. Before we see the packages, what do you want to see on the packages or what you don't want to see? If you are going to have frozen foods put on the shelves in your stores in Japan, what are some of the things on those packages that are going to help you decide whether or not this is of interest to you or not?*

Pictures.

Moderator 2: *Pictures. What should the pictures be like?*

Like yummy and...

Moderator 2: *Of hot, prepared of the food when it's all done and cooked? Or how it is raw? You know what I mean? I mean, do you want to see like fresh broccoli or do you want to see the broccoli steaming and all cooked or...*

Cooked.

Moderator 2: *Cooked, okay. Because you get both here sometimes it depends, once you see a picture of you know raw chicken and the vegetables around it for vegetable soup or something like that, or you could see a bowl of steaming soup, you know?*

Oh, okay, I get what you mean. I thought you were talking about like...

Moderator 2: *Like the raw food not microwaved. No, that probably wouldn't be very good.*

Like take it out of the box and take a picture of it.

Everyone: (laughter)

Moderator 2: *I meant like the ingredients. The ingredients.*

I think it depends when they put like raw chicken and vegetables on it, they are focusing on the freshness there is, I mean that's what they want to sell, the freshness that there is on

the picture and when it's cooked maybe the taste of the food itself and how—I mean the warmth it could have.

Moderator 2: *(Moderator 1), what are some of the other things that we should talk about for the packages?*

Moderator 1: *[something about quantity(??)]*

Moderator 2: *You said quantity? Okay. What do you mean?*

I don't like to buy like Meijers' frozen foods because they do not always fill me up.

Moderator 2: *I just buy two, you know, two TV dinners. Okay. So quantity. What else?*

Additives and preservatives.

But if the product open, even if you put it in the refrigerator, that the food sort of smell, like, how do you say?

Moderator 2: *Absorbs smell, that makes sense, I understand what you meant. Others of you agree or disagree with some of these things said? Does it matter.*

[something about restaurants using frozen food and that restaurants think it looks good]

Moderator 2: *And they think it was fresh, but it wasn't. So what does that tell you? That people really don't know?*

They don't know.

Moderator 1: *So, how about packaging materials, the plastic is better or worse, paper is better or worse, what do you think?*

I was surprised to see paper materials. I don't know if that's good or bad, the product, because I think I've never seen paper materials in Japan, paper boxes.

Moderator 2: *What's your first impression when you see that, what do you think? Do you think that is good or that's bad and why? Paper products in packaging. When the first time you saw it, what did you think? "Oh, that's wonderful," or "oh, that's terrible?"*

It's paper, because paper it's becomes wet, I thought is it okay for freezing, but I don't know if it's good or not.

Moderator 2: *Okay, you're not sure, but you wondered. It made you worry.*

I'll be honest, I didn't think it was very—I didn't get a very positive feeling about it, because as she said, I like the frozen parts, but there was just like a layer of ice on it and like a little, yeah, it was icy and some were wet, you could see on the box that it used to be wet and it has this mark on it and I didn't think that was very clean, because paper is not clean. That's what I first thought, but I don't know, because it was frozen, maybe I got used to it, I didn't really consider it.

To me, paper is okay as far as I put it into the oven or microwave, but when I want to eat, I just like to put it in my favorite dish.

Supervisor: *So you don't like eating out of the package or the dish that comes with the package?*

That's right.

Supervisor: *Do other people agree with that?*

When I used the frozen vegetable in a paper bag, it was convenient because I can't do everything at one time, so I...

Moderator 2: *So portions? We ask the question a couple of minutes ago that essentially said, "you will be seeing more frozen food packages in Japan with whole dinners or large meals, what will you be looking for." We noted whether it has preservatives, if you have noted whether or not it's paper or whatever. What are some other things that you will want to see or not want to see that will make a difference whether or not those packages appeal to you? We talked about brand a little bit, we talked about advertising. What are some other things when you see them? We talked about whether the food looks real.*

Actually, I think I do want it packed in the first place. Like I do not like just a clear plastic band over it, you can see what you put in the microwave oven, so to me, maybe I'm just not used to it, but I just want some kind of cover on it, then you can't see the inside.

Moderator 2: *(Moderator 1), other things?*

Moderator 1: *What about recycling? How do you care about it?*

I care...

Moderator 2: *Maybe a different question would be about that. How would you know if it's easy to recycle?*

I learn at the campus.

Moderator 2: *I mean, when you look at a package, what do you look for that says, "I can recycle this simply."? Like in the United States, you get a little symbol, you get a little round, you know what I'm talking about, it's little arrows or something like that. Do you have that in Japan? Do you have something that simple? Okay, like a number one or number two on the bottom of a jar or something like that.*

Yes we do.

I don't much about recycle [inaudible].

We have recycle, but there is no number in Japan.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so just whether or not it can be recycled.*

If the city does recycle, but my city wasn't one [that recycled].

Moderator 1: *So whose city does recycling?*

Our city.

Divide the plastics or paper.

[inaudible]

Some parts of Tokyo, depends on the ward would you say, it's divided up, it does depend on the region, I mean the place [inaudible].

[inaudible]

Moderator 2: *That's interesting.*

Moderator 1: *What if you were in Japan, you recycle it?*

I do.

Moderator 2: *You do. You don't.*

I do milk bottle, pop bottle.

Supervisor: *PET is the name of the plastic.*

Moderator 2: *I've never heard that.*

Supervisor: *Tetrathaline or something like that.*

Moderator 2: *Now, (Moderator 1) will pull out and I will help, we will look at some packages and see if they're--have you evaluate them. What you like or dislike about them. We really are trying to get your opinion about, for these types of products, would you want the product inside the package and how does the package itself increase or decrease the likelihood that you would buy the product. We have a variety of them and they all, many of them have numbers on them, so if they do, you can say that your opinion goes with these different numbers.*

Everyone: *(laughter)*

Moderator 2: *What are you laughing about, what's your first impression? Why? Number one. Talk about it. Would you buy that now?*

Number one? I would buy that now.

Moderator 2: *What's good or bad about the package? Why you were happy to see that.*

I mean, okay, [inaudible] is more like an ethnic...

Moderator 2: *Yu-Sing isn't the real Chinese company.*

The symbol looks real.

Moderator 2: *I'm sure it does for most Americans too.*

Moderator 1: *So what about number two? This is actually just one box and this is much easier to open than the first one.*

Moderator 2: *Well, let's talk about that. How important is it? Is that something you even know about to open or close the box? Does that make any difference at all? Is it something you think about? Don't think about it?*

Not to me at all.

Moderator 2: *You've never been frustrated by that for it to make a difference?*

No.

I never thought about that.

Moderator 2: *Any other like just first impressions? You all have just seen these products. Many of you maybe haven't seen these. If they were in Japan and you were seeing them for the first time, or you see them, or you haven't seen them before or other people would, what would they think? What would their reactions be? If they looked at it on the shelf, would they likely buy it or not and why?*

Moderator 1: *You said you won't buy it, why?*

I said that. Because I don't like it. I don't think so.

It should have a stereotype on it.

Japanese people would buy this kind of product several times, but I wonder if they keep buying this kind of product continuously.

Moderator 2: *Let's talk about the stereotype. What is the stereotype?*

I mean people using like this or it's [inaudible] man.

Everyone: (laughter)

I think that's what she cleared out, like cooking is a novel job to do. I think that's one thing.

Moderator 2: *And you don't think it is here?*

Well, compared, I don't want to over generalize it, but yes, the amount of TV dinners we have in the States are completely different.

Moderator 2: *Do you think it's going to change twenty years from now?*

Yes, I think it would.

Moderator 2: *What's going to make a change?*

The convenience.

Moderator 2: *Other comments or first impressions? What do you think? You laugh.*

About how we are doing this kind of food. Um...it's not good.

Moderator 2: *Then why did you eat it?*

The outside is wet, it's not dry and the potato it is different, the outside is hot, but the inside is cold.

Moderator 2: *Then the food itself isn't very good. Let's talk about some of the packaging things. Look closely at the packages. What would you want to see, what do you like about what they've done? Let's talk about the good things. What are some of the good things about these packages? What have they done that is smart? That if you were trying to see the product, you would do again?*

[end of side one]

[beginning of side two]

Moderator 2: *Because of the plate?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Well, who is that appealing to? Look at that. See the little dragon or alligator or whatever it is. It's a fun piece. Do you know what that is? I have a four-year old.*

This picture looks really nasty (laughter).

Moderator 2: *Does it (laughter). Why? What's nasty about that? My guess is that's not what they were shooting for.*

I think the redness of the [inaudible], like it doesn't look like a fresh rag(?).

It looks like right off of a can.

The point you cleared out, like who is this for? Like it has an alligator and it just says for kids.

Moderator 2: *Do kids have any choice in Japan? Do they go with their mothers just the same as here, "I want this and I want that," and grab stuff off the shelves. Do they have as much power? I mean here, like cereals and stuff, if you buy cereals for children, they totally decide. And they decide many things. Do they?*

For sweets yes, but not for frozen foods.

There is no selection for frozen foods.

Moderator 2: *In general, do they have as much say about what they eat, or does the mother just decide?*

Children are more obedient in Japan.

Moderator 2: *I guess that's what I'm trying to get them to admit. Other comments? Look at the boxes. Some more good things, then we will look at the bad things. Good or bad things. First impressions, you look at them, at the information that is there, that should be there or is not there.*

At first I got shocked because when I opened it, the amount was so small. It should be big.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so it's a misleading picture, but that's probably good because if they showed the actual amount, maybe you would not have purchased it. Right, the first time at least. Other things.*

I come here and I first buy this type of product. I bought this type of product because it is separately, so after cooking, it was [mixed], so I choose this type of product.

Supervisor: *Where the plate has separate compartments.*

Moderator 2: *What are some things that you would expect to be different in Japan or that would need to in order to help it be more successful in Japan?*

If I can see the inside product.

The tray itself, the picture. I think we would prefer something on a plate.

Moderator 2: *I think most of us would prefer something on a plate.*

Yes, and ah, right. This one, even though it's on a plate I'm not sure how...even though this is on a plate it doesn't look hot.

Moderator 2: *It doesn't look hot. Okay, and you think that's maybe important, that it looks hot. Okay? Others of you, what are some suggestions, other than putting it in Japanese, some Japanese symbols or characters, what else would you need to see?*

I mean, it's too big for the Japanese refrigerators.

Oah, ah...that too...

Moderator 2: *Okay, talk to me about it. Is it?*

This size is bad...yeah...

Moderator 2: *So smaller portions are necessary?*

I don't like the bowl.

Moderator 2: *Okay, what would be better?*

Supervisor: *What kind of refrigerators are the most common? How big are most people's refrigerators?*

About (inaudible)...

If you compare a family refrigerator, I think you'll think about half the size at the biggest, half the size.

Supervisor: *And do they usually have a freezer in those refrigerators?*

We do but, ...

The function is the same but the size is smaller. Not very, they're like 2/3 I guess.

Single person have much smaller.

Most customer buy these kind of things these are single so they have very small refrigerator.

My refrigerator in my dorm wouldn't fit this, this is the only size that would fit in here in the space. I always think about the size when I buy this stuff.

Moderator 2: *I have 3 refrigerators or freezers in my home, 3 full size. A full size freezer and 2 friges, one just for beverages, just for drinks. Okay. Other comments. What would you look for, suggestions that you would have?*

Maybe a picture of the food, how it can be eliminated..

Moderator 2: *To be eliminated, and then instead do what?*

Well, for instance when you see a package you call Ramen noodles, you don't see pictures of the noodles all the time. Because sometimes ...well there comes a brand and I mean, if

you trust a brand name then you know that without looking at the food, I mean a picture of the food you can just buy it.

Moderator 2: *Then what information would you want other than the brand name?*

Well, you still want to know what's inside of this but...

Okay, I mean, how you know what is inside is from TV advertisement. Yes, the reason we don't in some foods we don't have the food on it is because we saw the commercial itself and we were familiar with the picture on the package of something else and then...

Moderator 2: *Well, then let's talk about that. What should the advertisements do? If you were creating some of the advertisements in Japan, to try and sell more frozen food packages, what would you suggest? What should the advertisements be like? What are important things they consider including...or that they don't do?*

What TV advertisements should be?

Moderator 2: *What should they do in those adds? Like I think you mentioned, the food should be hot and show it fully prepared and cooked. What else? What are some important things?*

Taste.

Moderator 2: *Taste? Talk about the taste? Okay.*

Um hum, and how easy it is.

Moderator 2: *Okay, well, talk about how easy it is. Is that information you get on these packages, how easy it is?*

Supervisor: *How long it takes, you know, 30 seconds or ...*

Moderator 2: *Okay. Other comments about the packages?*

Basically, I think I should change to frozen, with my sort of change, I should change image.

Moderator 2: *How do they do that? Many of you don't have a good image to start with. Many Japanese people will have even a poorer image than you do. You've been here, you've seen them. Many of you are busier people, you're obviously more educated people. What can be done to change the image, the stereotype coming in that the packaged food may not be as healthy, that it may not taste as good...*

Associating the brand name and the already famous restaurants.

Moderator 2: *Okay. The only Japanese restaurant I know is like the Benihana...what are good Japanese restaurants? Are there some nationally renowned restaurants? I mean, I can sure name them in France or the United States or something but I don't know. Are there some, do you know what I mean, or some chefs? Are there some renowned chefs that many people, you know, like in the United States I would know Julius Child or Jacques Poupon or you know, different chefs that you all might know? I'm trying to think of any because that's a good suggestion.*

Yeah...(inaudible) (laughter)...

Moderator 2: *What did you say, sir?*

There's a TV show called cooking with someone...

And, I think, giving the information, like just, attach more, more...

Moderator 2: *More emphasis on...*

More emphasis, more information to get the information.

Moderator 2: *Yeah, I was just going to ask her...who...you didn't seem to have a very good opinion of these things. You buy the food for your family. What would make you more likely to buy these packaged frozen foods?*

I don't know. Before I get married I alone. I used to buy these sometimes because it is convenient so even later, I would buy this if I have no time to cook so...for myself or for my family but...

Moderator 2: *Is there anything that the package could tell you that would make you more interested in buying that product? What suggestions would you have. Like I think somebody said nutrition information and said...okay, salt and sugar and whatever.*

The thing is, just listing the nutrition information is not going to help because, I mean, if you have a lot of salt in it, if the consumer knows that there is a lot of salt in that thing they aren't going to buy it. What I would suggest is to tie up with a manufacturer and eliminate all the salt and sugar and let the people add it.

Moderator 2: *Make better products...*

Yeah, add that afterwards. Like and then, by doing that they can eliminate the stereotype that the foods are unhealthy. A lot of us mentioned they have too much salt, too much sugar or too much fat or whatever, well, fat you can't really avoid but for salt, I guess you can cook without salt and then add salt to your...

Moderator 2: So they actually need to change the foods that are offered on the market and that's likely to happen. Okay. Other comments about the packages...things that would make a difference whether or not it would have appeal to you?

Supervisor: What about the kind of tray...

Moderator 2: The inside. For instance, this is with Supervisor, she pulled out one here, this is for an oriental style dumpling, lean cuisine, chicken and vegetables, dumplings, rice.. comments when you first see this...this is what you pull out, this is what it looks like...you're going to pull out frozen dumplings in there and frozen rice...would this cook well? Would this make the food taste well? Is this easy? What's bad about this? What's good about this?

Moderator 1: Let us compare with this one. This one is kind of flat...some meat and vegetables and potatoes and it is separated. What do you think?

Moderator 2: Or, some of these that have none, that you just pop...if this had a bag and he just washed it real carefully or...

Supervisor: That comes directly with the food...

Moderator 2: Yeah, there's no bag or anything, it's just in there.

Moderator 1: I think there's a film on the inside of the box.

Moderator 2: Does it make a difference? Would you feel better or worse if there is no inside packaging, the stuff is just frozen in a clump in there or, it's in here, frozen in a clump in here?

I don't care.

Moderator 2: You don't care. Okay. she doesn't care. Others of you?

I would prefer one that has the food tray in it.

Moderator 2: Okay. Why?

Well, first of all, I don't like the plastic bags inside and the film that covers it. It's just, you're making too much garbage...

Moderator 2: *Why? It isn't easier, you know?*

Well, is it?

Moderator 2: *He's really environmentally conscious. He doesn't want to make more garbage. How about some of the others? Does it make a difference? Do you care? Is this better to have this inside?*

It is because it looks like (inaudible) the paper, so...

Moderator 2: *Okay, you don't want it to touch the paper?*

I prefer the food should be wrapped.

Moderator 2: *Okay, isn't this wrapped though?*

I don't think that's enough.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Why don't you think it's enough? What would be bad about just having this?*

It's paper. I don't think it's good...

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Moderator 1: *Do you call this wrapped? Inside the box?*

Yes, but I don't like this tray. (laughter).

Supervisor: *Which tray do you like the best if you had to choose one?*

Moderator 2: *There were some that were more like china...expensive TV dinners, you know what I mean, where it's a hard plastic thing where you could even keep it if you want. Do you know what I mean?*

That would be better.

Moderator 2: *Okay. But would you still then dump it on your plate on your ...or something? Okay. Other comments. Look closely at some of the boxes and see if there is other information on there. Does it have what you want or is it missing information*

that it should have. Especially think if you were back in Japan, what's not there that maybe should be there or what's on there that would not make sense, that would need to be changed. We talked about the size of the package...is pricing information the same in Japan? Do you just get a little sticker like that?

Yes, uh huh...

Moderator 2: Are all products labeled? I mean, that's a big deal in the United States. In Michigan all products are labeled but not all over the United States. Do you always get a price on everything? You know, a little sticker, the same type thing?

We usually kind of get these kind of small stickers on sometimes.

Okay, just like that.

I think that might be in the stores now, some of the larger supermarkets, just regular markets.

May I go back to....

Moderator 2: You're hungry aren't you....

Again, I cannot find the shelf life...

Moderator 2: You cannot identify the shelf. Do you actually look?

Yeah, I will.

Moderator 2: You will, okay. all right. The shelf life, how long it will last.

Oh, okay...

Oh, shelf life...

Moderator 2: Others of you, talk about that. Is that important, the shelf life or the sell by date, you know when it has to be sold by or something. Is that something you would look for?

Um, because it was frozen I thought it would keep...

Moderator 2: So it wasn't something that important?

To me, it did not have the...

(inaudible talking)

Yeah, it really does but I didn't look for it.

Supervisor: But some people would, in fact, a lot of the food that you sell in Japan has code dates on it, right?

Moderator 2: Okay. Other comments, any other things you can think about?

But that always change. Read on, the manufacturer doesn't have to print the date.

Moderator 2: They're not required to, it's their choice but you would suggest it? Okay.

Moderator 1: How long do you think you would keep those frozen foods in your fridge?

Moderator 2: In the freezer...what did you say?

Supervisor: In the freezer though.

A week. In Japan.

A month I think.

Yeah, a month.

Because, in my family we bought frozen food for the times when we can't afford our dinner, which means we don't know when that's going to come so that's...

Moderator 2: Do you agree? Is that what you will buy it for? What would be the purpose of buying this food. I mean, you're kind of saying an emergency stock, when you're out of other choices, am I correct or you're really rushed. When would you probably buy this type of product in Japan, for what occasion and for what use?

A midnight.

Moderator 2: What's that? A midnight, okay. But, is it something you would have all the time and would you always keep some of these on hand, I mean, that you would expect okay, every time, every week that you're going to buy one of them and eat one of them a week. How often would you expect to eat it? She is shaking her head no.

I don't want to expect that

Moderator 2: Do you eat that often here?

Yeah, often.

Moderator 2: Okay, do you think you'll eat it as often in Japan? Why would it be different? Will you be less busy in Japan than you are here?

I am busier in the US.

Moderator 2: You're busier here?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: I hope you all find that to be true.

When I was in Japan I never eat this...I never eat...

Moderator 2: But you're going to be working full time when you get back now, it could be a different ball game ...no?

No.

Moderator 2: What do you think...how often might you buy it? What do you think...or what would you buy it for?

Ah...I still don't buy these but um, I might buy this in case I busy...if I know that but...

Moderator 2: Okay, but not for a regular staple, a regular meal. Okay, anybody disagree? Think that it would be something that you would probably eat once a week? Once a month?

Actually, maybe college students would have it...in the refrigerator in Japan.

Moderator 2: In Japan? Okay. Who do you think it would be most appropriate for?

Young, single...

Moderator 2: I mean like, and that says who they should market it to you know, what kind of food they should put in it and stuff like that.

But nowadays maybe to market to older people too.

Moderator 2: *Well, we'll talk about that. Would older people be interested and what would be the differences you would need to do to get them interested? Why do you say that first of all? Why do you think...*

Well, because a lot of the ...I don't know, a lot of the older people are listening what the .(inaudible) or they really can't but their family is not around to take care of them as often as they used to... like they used to.

Supervisor: *So these are people living alone?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *What do you think about what she said, is she right? Is that maybe a market?*

All the older people who have strong (inaudible)...they would...

And I think the nutrition that she mentioned, like if someone has a heart disease or...

Moderator 2: *So you'd need to really make a big deal, like that one is called "Healthy Choice", you know. Talk about maybe what some of these products should be called. Look at some of these things...we have "Lean Cuisine", we have "Healthy Choice", we have just Food Club fried chicken meal...are there certain words or terms or images for the names of the products that would make more sense to consider using in Japan or to avoid? The same type of things...*

I think I would avoid Hungry Man in the first place.

Moderator 2: *Why? Why? I mean, I know why my stereotype is, what's your stereotype if it says Hungry Man and that really gets to something you said...you get more. I mean, that's the idea, it's more, you get bigger portions, I don't know...*

It's just professing of the quantity not quality.

Moderator 2: *Okay, and that's bad?*

Well, as far as they say in English, I think that's all right, if somebody translates this into Japanese...

Oh,...oh...

Moderator 2: *Why?*

Well, in English it's a kind of...

Moderator 2: Oh, it's like, I understand you use French terms or Japanese terms...ugh, huh...that's why we have Yu-Sing Chinese food over there, you know, that's probably no more Chinese than anything else in here. What are other suggestions of the words to use or not to use? Other type of names that would make sense or do any of these.. would they be more appealing or would make or be a mistake in Japan?

Hand made or homemade.

Moderator 2: Okay. Words that say hand made or homemade...something like that..

Traditional.

Moderator 2: Traditional, okay.

Homestyle...natural...

Moderator 2: Sure, no, that makes sense. You can call it anything you like...they don't know...you know, I mean some people, it just gives you some cues to what the food would be like. Homestyle, natural, other packaging things that might be important. If you want to sell more of these products and you own that company, what would you suggest to do or not do?

You can...if you sell it to elderly people you, I think you can sell, definitely (inaudible).

Moderator 2: Okay, so what the product is...

Selections some...more like Japanese taste and...

Moderator 2: Okay.

Moderator 1: What would be good for them, for the elderly?

Vegetables...

Moderator 2: Rice, fish?

Fish and...

Moderator 2: You had a comment about opening or something, or directions. I don't remember what you said.

Directions.

Moderator 2: *Oh, he likes it, it says open here on one of the corners.*

Yes, I think that's good, especially I think for maybe a younger generation. Maybe...they prefer very easy opening and...

The older too...my mom maybe doesn't know where to open it...(laughter)

Supervisor: *I was interested in hearing you say that you would only keep frozen food for a week or maybe a month. How long do you think frozen food lasts?*

I think that's why I did not look at the manufacturing date or something...

Supervisor: *Because you figure it lasts forever pretty much?*

Yes, because it's frozen and I know how it affects against germs and everything. Um, but, still I would only keep it for a week or so because first of all, maybe I don't, I don't really trust those frozen foods because if you freeze it, you don't know what they're made from and you can't tell the quality, not much, and so this is ... to me this is for a very emergency situation.

Moderator 1: *So you would keep it a long time in your freezer?*

Actually no, I don't think so. I'd rather keep some fresh vegetables like fresh carrots or celery or tomatoes for emergency or fresh juice, maybe that would be an option.

Moderator 2: *(Moderator 1), other questions?*

Moderator 1: *Have to tell them the official shelf life.*

Moderator 2: *The off shelf? What did you say?*

Moderator 1: *Oh, it's 18 month long shelf life...one and a half year...*

(inaudible)

Moderator 2: *Even he looks scared at that...it's too long...*

Supervisor: *But the fact you have a real small refrigerator would prohibit you from keeping it too long. But are you used to buying some meals that are sort of like this but are refrigerated? Somebody mentioned that earlier...and those clearly have to have a code date because they would only last for a couple of weeks.*

Moderator 1: *Are you thinking about these kind of prepared meal or dinners or...*

Supervisor: *Or maybe just the dumplings as an ingredient as well?*

The single item products I think would...are more, I think they're more usable, I think they're more frozen food.

Moderator 2: *But one thing we didn't really talk about is...I think everything here pretty much are products that have to be microwaved. Does that surprise you or interest you and does that make a difference? Are you used to microwaving key parts of your dinners and if so what do you use the microwave for? Like, my microwave is mostly used for popcorn, what are your microwaves used for at home? Do you all have them?*

Home you mean in Japan or home in...

Moderator 2: *Home in Japan. You know, you've got them, what do you use them for? What goes in the microwave?*

Heating leftovers.

Moderator 2: *Heating leftovers.*

I think that's the main purpose for them...

Supervisor: *Which is basically what this is.*

Yes.

Sometimes it's in (inaudible)...it can be potatoes, in the microwave...

Moderator 2: *If they're half done...Do you have a problem with that? Do you have any perception that because you're microwaving your dinner it will be better or worse or what would those perceptions be? Does it make a difference? Is microwave food just fine?*

I think microwave to our generation and maybe our parents, it wouldn't be a problem but the more older people I'm not sure...

Moderator 2: *What do you think? I saw you make a face!*

Well, when I cook scramble egg with a frying pan and I...but, when I made it in microwave it isn't right so it depends on the food...

Moderator 2: *So it can taste the food taste...food appeal.*

I have a question, could be (inaudible) this occasion, it isn't very hard to, sometimes the particular microwave is modified...I mean like...

Moderator 2: *Oh, you mean, it melts or something, okay...and that's bad?*

I don't like the image...

Moderator 2: *Okay, do you know what he said? He said he doesn't like the image that sometimes it melts or dries or shrivels or twists or something like that after you've cooked it once and it's not as appealing. Then throw it on the plate and you'll be fine. Any others of you think about that or does that make a difference? (Moderator 1), do you want to conclude to the final question or do you have any other questions for (Supervisor)?*

Supervisor: *Yeah, I'd like to clarify, what is your preferred material for this bowl. You talked about the fact that you didn't much like paper, because and I guess, you don't have as much paper in Japan, you don't have as many trees so you wouldn't have as many paper packages but which...here's paper, this is plastic...what is this anyway?*

Moderator 2: *It's a laminate...that's paper as well, it's more like a wax paper...but it could be foam...you know..*

Supervisor: *And this is plastic. Does everyone agree that paper is worse than plastic for the bowl?*

Moderator 2: *Does it make a difference even? For how many of you?*

It doesn't matter for me, for plastic or paper, that...maybe my mom's generation cares...

Supervisor: *And what would she like or prefer?*

Maybe she prefer plastic because she told...my mom once...she wants cleanest image...

Moderator 2: *I can see...Styrofoam in from in front of her I think, isn't it.. the inner package. Is that Styrofoam or paper, I can't see from here?*

Supervisor: *I think it's paper...okay, and so what about the, this kind of paper versus that kind of paper?*

For them, their generation...that kind...

Supervisor: *It would be worse?*

Yeah, I think she thinks it's worse because lack of cleanliness. But, I don't care because I think it's good for recycling and you know...

Supervisor: *Any other comments about the plate or the actual bowl this stuff is cooked in?*

If they have this...like if they have the same meal and this had the same meal...like, if they tasted the same and if they were really the same, if that was made of recycled paper I might just for that reason but I do understand that this works ...looks cleaner, it looks like a plate itself and it has the image of a plate but that doesn't actually, it's a package and I think that would make a difference to I don't know the older you are, maybe they might prefer a plate, something that you could...

Supervisor: *Uh, huh. This you would probably take out and put on your own plate, I would assume. Right? How would...using that package would you also take it out and put it on your own plate if it was exactly the same food?*

*I think some people would prefer putting it on their own plate because if you are serving to your family actually, if I were like a father and if I had my wife and kids or something like that, I would never just serve it like this.
(laughter)...but I mean, if I were just...*

Moderator 2: *Talk to me in 10 years, we'll see., because you come home, you're tired, your 4 year old is jumping on you, see what you say.*

Okay, I will promise...

Supervisor: *But how about for you right now?*

Right now, if I was just alone, no one looking at me, I would just eat it right out of this package...

Moderator 2: *What about this one...would you...*

I would just eat it right out of it..

I think it's all right if they wrap the paper itself and then...

Supervisor: *Uh huh, well this is sealed.. this*

It's sealed and still I want it wrapped.

Moderator 2: *She likes lots of packaging.*

I think she doesn't like the package touching the food

That's it and... the outer most part...

Moderator 2: *She wants an inner package.*

Like the package and the...though it's sealed, a package is a package, there is nothing that is...she has an image and this is a plate and it's not a package, it's for food and I don't know, I don't really care about it...well, I personally don't care about it because I know it's sealed and it's not direct paper, it has film inside...

Supervisor: *It's coated.*

Yeah, it's coated.

Moderator 1: *So who is okay with this kind of package just...one, two, three, four, five, six...so...*

But, I'm afraid, I was afraid after cooking it will get wet...so.....

Moderator 2: *You don't like your food soggy do you? You said that about the chicken too...you want dry foods.*

Yeah, after drying it's okay but at first....

Supervisor: *The paper gets pretty wet...*

It's up to the food...whether it soak. If, if, well, it is, this packaging is proper for kind of food like pizza but, if the food which contains water or ...I think this kind of package is better.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so it matters what it's in.*

For me, getting wet is okay but I care about plastic pack because it might be...how stuff comes out, I mean with microwave so I think I prefer it better than plastic pack but after I came here I don't care because I'm lazy and I like my ...(inaudible)...(laughter).

I think it looks...well, company should tell whether the package is all right, they should prove that to people.

Moderator 2: *My guess is they won't say it's bad..*

Supervisor: *Well, in fact there is a lot of testing, we do a lot of research here at the School of Packaging on making sure that the plastic doesn't get into the food, looking at alternatives..*

But what you say, it's under the Federal Government or something like that and you won't say it's terrible. Like if you hear it, heat this in the microwave with the food in it, like, is it completely (inaudible)...the plastic (inaudible)...is it under the limit that the government...under the government...

Supervisor: *That's a good question.*

Like if it's ...even though if it's under government standard, I can't...

Moderator 2: *I can't believe it would be zero...there's not some fumes, some smell or something...*

Right, I'm very skeptical about it like...

Moderator 2: *Unless you're really hungry and busy...*

Yeah, and like um...like if I really cared about it I would eat it on a plate, on a china or a glass plate, if I really cared. Well, maybe I don't because I (inaudible)...but if I was to serve it to my ... if I had a family or something and if I went to serve it, I might not heat it from this I would just...even though it's frozen, right in here, I would just take it out and heat it on a separate plate.

(inaudible)

Uh huh.

(inaudible)

Moderator 2: *it's that special taste...right?*

Supervisor: *Polyethylene tetra.....*

This maybe is different from discussion but well, I learned this occasion...I went back home for 3 weeks and what I learned is, raw fish by seaweed will keep it's freshness for about 2 weeks, raw fish, so, there should be some other ways that they don't have to use such thing

Moderator 1: *I'd like to ask the last questions...what is the most important thing you buy this kind of stuff...*

Moderator 2: *Go right around the room. What's the one main reason why you would buy this type of thing when you go back or why you won't buy it or one main suggestion you would have. We've talked about lots of things, we've talked about ..the most important...that will either stop you from buying it or get you to buy...these packaged frozen foods once you get back to Japan.*

So, not country...I'm single so probably I would buy this kind of thing for how fast it is...

Moderator 2: *How fast. Okay.*

Personally, I would ..most I would consider...

Moderator 2: *And how likely is it? Is it really unlikely that you'll ever buy it? Probably you'll buy it? You'll definitely buy it? What would you think?*

Hmm...could you repeat that?

Moderator 2: *How likely will you buy it? When you get back there do you think...we've talked about it a lot.. you will never buy it, you will definitely buy it or probably or maybe? You know, we've talked about a lot...when you get back there what do you think.. if you see it in the stores or you get married or whatever...will these end up in your freezer?*

Ummm probably I would buy this, I was just going to say.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Personally I would be concerned about the nutrition, what's the...it's a major factor. I mean, I yes, nutrition would be the ...the main reason, I mean, it would not be the taste, it would not even be the taste and, to me, these kind of food would be my last option.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so pretty unlikely that you will buy it.*

Yes, to me it would be the last option, my last choice.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

I would probably keep one in the fridge always just for the very busy times. I'd go for taste. I wouldn't include this into my regular meal schedule or anything but just because I use it so infrequently I think.

Moderator 2: Okay.

I don't think I would eat that often but I would go for the price.

Moderator 2: Okay.

I would always keep this one in my fridge and I will

Moderator 2: Why?

Why? Because for when I have the time I would cook but when I don't have the time I would use this one because it's easy and it's ...and most important thing for me is taste.

Moderator 2: Okay.

It's price and amount and taste.

Moderator 2: Okay, the amount that you get in here? Okay. Do you think you will buy some? Will you buy some when you go back to Japan? Will you probably keep one or more in your freezer?

Not much.

Moderator 2: Okay.

I don't think I will buy this in...but I might give a chance if it looks good and if it kind of ...I would buy it maybe.

Moderator 2: You'll give it one chance.. okay.

Yeah, that's it.

Moderator 2: Okay.

Probably I don't think I would buy.

Moderator 2: Now that's surprising. Seriously. You buy it here a lot, what's going to be different when you get back there? Somebody going to hand you food?

Because...because...

Are you going to get married?

We're in (inaudible)...we don't have options.

Moderator 2: Okay, you're going to go back there. Are you going to cook more?

I will...

Moderator 2: What will be so different that something that you eat here fairly often, you won't eat there at all?

Yeah, I won't buy...it's different, I mean, I don't like it, but I have no choice...

Moderator 2: So, you'll have better choices.

Supervisor: And we all eaten Owen Hall food, we know what that choice is..

Moderator 2: So you think you'll have better choices.

Yeah.

(inaudible speaking)

(laughter)

Your wife...your girlfriend...your wife...

He wants to get married.

No.

My mom.

Moderator 2: You're mom will cook when you get back?

Yup.

Moderator 2: That's really nice. Okay.

I don't like to use this kind of thing but I would buy if I really busy, I have no time.

Moderator 2: Is that likely? Will you work when you go back to Japan?

Yeah, probably.

Moderator 2: So, you may become very busy.

Yes, but, not....I don't like to use this as much as possible.

Moderator 2: Okay, so a minimum.

I care about nutrition, especially salt.

To me, rather than buying some of these things, I would like to make them myself and preserve them...I'd like to...

Moderator 2: And do you think you'll have time and willingness...

Maybe just on Sundays...or just good for...

I too...

Moderator 2: You don't want it soggy...

Yeah. Frozen food...mostly producing and going to ...how many kinds of food can I have and....in Japan I don't ...I won't buy frozen food because I, I purchase and prepare it...it's not frozen

Moderator 2: Okay, the stores that they talked about. Okay. How about you (Moderator 1)? What will you do when you go back? (Moderator 1)'s got away without saying much here, let's talk to (Moderator 1) for a minute.

I should have talked more.

Moderator 2: Okay, talk to us.

I tried all of them (sample frozen whole meals), you know.

Moderator 2: Obviously. Before this project did you eat them?

Yes....oh, no. That was first time I tried. I didn't realize these were on the market. Um, I think they...

Moderator 2: Does your wife...I know (Moderator 1) is married...does your wife do the cooking?

Yes.

Moderator 2: Does she buy the food?

I do it.

Moderator 2: Okay. You buy the food but she does the cooking?

Both of us do it...both of us...but this (frozen whole meal) is very good, pretty good, I thought.

Moderator 2: Okay. So when you go back what will you do?

We will have some in the freezer but just one or two...

Moderator 2: Okay, so for an emergency or when you are busy?

Right.

Moderator 2: When you get back to Japan will your wife do most of the cooking and shopping?

Yes.

Moderator 2: Okay. Do you guys have anymore questions for (Moderator 1)? Put him on the spot here guys, here's your chance.

Supervisor: Which is the most appetizing color?

Green.

Moderator 2: The green. Any others, any preference? Which is the worst if not best?

Purple.

Moderator 2: You don't like the purple...okay. Wait until you have a child and see what they say.

Supervisor: What about red and orange? Typically in America lots of these packages are red or orange. Is that an appetizing color?

Yeah, I think it appeals heat maybe...

Moderator 2: How about the white? See the Food Club fried chicken, it's mostly white, the background.

It looks cheaper, it's...

Moderator 2: It looks cheaper.

How about the black?

Moderator 2: The black.

That's for maybe like in the city as you said or...

Oriental?

Yeah, oriental...because the (inaudible) it had to be yellow and red maybe...

Moderator 2: So it shows up. Any other comments?

Moderator 1: Okay. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Number 2 - Transcription: MSU Female Students

Moderator 2: *What I'd like to do is just explain to you why we asked you to come here today or why (Moderator 1) asked you to. What we're doing is really called a Focus Group and what a Focus Group is just a discussion where people give your own ideas or your own opinions about what you like or dislike about a particular product or whatever you think about a particular issue that a company might be interested in. A lot of companies are doing these type of focus groups. Many of you may find that wherever you end up working part of their market research department will be doing these focus groups. It is often very useful particularly when there isn't much of a research out there. Well, it won't surprise many of you to know but many different companies, one that (Moderator 1) is involved with, are looking at adding some new products to the Japanese market as they are in all of their markets and they are considering adding some new frozen food products in Japan and one thing they want to find out is will people buy them, what will make differences whether people choose those products or not and one particular thing that (Moderator 1) is interested in is how much difference will the packages make. Does it matter at all? What about the packages might make a difference? So, what we're going to do is just talk in general first off is talk about when you are in Japan you or your family, food purchases. Who buys the food? Who does the grocery shopping and what type of things matter and then more specifically we will talk about when you go to choose a different food product what do you look for as far as the package goes. And I know, a lot of times you don't even really think about it so, I accept that and what we're going to do first is just talk and then (Moderator 1) is actually going to show you a couple packages. Any questions from any of you? We are tape recording these discussions but everything you say is confidential, you know, this isn't too scary in here but, please, speak loud enough so we can get all the comments down so that when (Moderator 1) goes to do a transcription it's easy for him to type. He'll tell you it takes forever to do one of these things, to transcribe it. May I go around the room and have each person just briefly introduce yourself and tell me a couple of things about yourself. Tell me whatever it is you are studying here. How long have you been in the United States and what you think you'll be doing when you go back to Japan.*

I've been here just half year or, I don't know, about...I used to live in Japan alone for 2 years for college. I went to grocery shopping by myself.

Moderator 2: *What are you studying?*

Here?

Moderator 2: Here.

My major is communications.

Moderator 2: Okay. What will you do when you go back? Get a job in communications? No?

I didn't decide it.

Moderator 2: All right, thanks.

I've been here only a half year and I'm majoring in photo journalism at this time I'm interested in. So, hopefully I will get a job in Japan in but I don't know.

Moderator 2: Okay, thanks.

I've been here over 3 years and my major is business. I don't think I'm going to go back to Japan to get a job, I hope to get a job here in the United States.

I have been here for 3 years and my major is intelligence. I'm going back to Japan to get a job.

Moderator 2: For business, international studies or more government?

(inaudible).

Moderator 2: Okay.

I've been here for 3 years. My major is international relations. I want to go back to Japan to get a job, to earn enough money to go back to graduate school.

Moderator 2: Never enough, huh?

No.

Moderator 2: Well that's good though. (Moderator 1), I don't know if you know _____
.

Moderator 1: My name is (Moderator 1) and I am doing this as a Master Thesis and...

Moderator 2: *He's going to go back to Japan and make packages for you all to buy things. Thanks. Who does the shopping? Talk to me a little bit about food shopping. We've done one other focus group a couple weeks ago and (Moderator 1) is going to do a couple more and it was very interesting to find out many people shop very differently in Japan than what we do here.*

Moderator 1: *When you were in Japan.*

Moderator 2: *Yeah, when you were in Japan or when you think you are going to go back. Did you do it? Did your mom do it? Did your father do it? Who was responsible? Tell me a little bit about it. How often they shopped, where they shopped, anything.*

My mom shopped once a week I think.

Moderator 1: *So how many times a week?*

Moderator 2: *She said just once.*

Like Monday or Sunday.

Moderator 2: *Did your mom work outside of the home?*

Yeah, she does.

Moderator 2: *Because that makes a difference sometimes. Sometimes, if your moms don't work then they're home more and they shop more.*

She works from Monday to Friday.

Moderator 2: *Oh, so full time. Okay. Others of you?*

My mom goes shopping every day.

Moderator 2: *Is that right? That's wild to me. Right around your home?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Does she work outside of the home?*

No.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Yeah, my mom goes everyday too.

Moderator 2: *Every day. And, they would typically just buy the food for that day, is that correct? I mean, like she would go in the morning to buy dinner? Do you know what I mean?*

Only afternoon.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

My mom usually goes every day but I think she usually buys most food on weekends and every day she needs something else, then she goes.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Yeah, usually my mom every day but...

Moderator 2: *How about when you guys go back? I know you're hoping not to but many of you will go back at some point. Do you think it will be the same? First of all, do you expect to be...your mothers all did the shopping but none of you said your fathers, none of you said for yourself, I mean, ___ said she did when she was there single but, will it be the same for you? Do you think you're going to get married right away and if you're not married...even when you're married do you still expect that it's your responsibility, you will do the shopping every day or will your husband do it or will you not shop as often? What do you think? You are all smiling.*

It depends, if I work every day and my husband does then maybe not but if I...

Moderator 2: *Then maybe not what?*

Maybe my husband and me like share.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Do you think he'll be good about that? Talk about Japanese men, do they want to shop?*

I don't think so.

Moderator 2: *Are the younger men better?*

I think are changing right now.

Moderator 2: *Why? Why are they changing?*

Because well...

Moderator 2: You're making them?

Maybe. I think so. Like both husband and wife are working now so they have to go shopping either one.

Moderator 2: Okay. Do you still think if you have a husband he will shop? Do you want him to?

Yeah, sure.

Moderator 2: How often do you think he'll shop. I mean, you said maybe not as much. Do you think you'll shop as much as your mom does?

Yeah, I think so.

Moderator 2: Still almost every day.

Yeah.

Moderator 2: Why?

Because I want to eat different foods every day.

Moderator 2: But if you buy it once a week you can still eat different food every day. Do you see what I mean? You could just buy more at one time. What is the advantage of shopping every day?

You can get fresh foods.

Moderator 2: When you think about shopping for food in Japan what are some of the things you look for, you said one thing you want is fresh food. What are other things you look for? How important is that, that it is fresh and what are the things, like when you shop here what do you look for?

Fresh, cheap, tasty.

Moderator 2: All right. What are typical things you eat? A lot of vegetables?

And fish.

Moderator 2: *And fish. Do most things that you get come, I don't know how they...it's just vegetables here where you just pick up broccoli or beans and stuff like that and put it in a bag or are they packaged at all? How much of what you buy is in a box or a can or a jar? In Japan.*

It's already packed like in a box or just plastic tray, wrapped.

I think maybe it depends how much you want to buy. If you have a big family you can buy the whole cabbage or something but if you are single and living alone half cabbages packed in plastic tray.

Moderator 2: *Do you have a lot of storage area? How much storage in your...yes, in your houses, like refrigerators. One thing that we're talking about for freezers is people have....for instance, I have 3 refrigerators in my home or 2 whole refrigerators and an extra freezer so I have 3 freezer areas so I buy a lot of food.*

How much you know, about...

Moderator 2: *I have one child.*

(laughter, much laughter)

Moderator 2: *Seriously, we keep a lot of food. I have one just for pop and stuff like that. Most of you for refrigerators and freezers...do you have one like normal sized refrigerator/freezer? A freezer on top and refrigerator on the bottom? Is it always full?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *I mean, do you keep it packed and always have a lot? Do you keep it full?*

Yeah, pretty much it is full. I surprised like, I mean where I stay they have a large refrigerator and freezer and I've never seen like such a big...

Moderator 2: *Do you like that? Would that be better?*

But I don't need it so big.

Moderator 2: *How about for others of you? What do you like differently or not like differently about shopping in the United States? Do you guys shop now at all? You all live in Owen? Where do you live, I didn't ask. Where do you live here?*

Off campus.

Moderator 2: *You live off campus in an apartment?*

Owen Hall.

Moderator 2: *Owen. See, it's different if you have somebody who makes your food for you every day.*

Off campus.

Moderator 2: *Off campus.*

On campus.

Moderator 2: *Owen?*

No, Mayo Hall.

Moderator 2: *Mayo, sure. For those of you that live...how about on campus...do you cook at all or do you just eat dorm food? Do you just eat at Owen?*

No, I sometimes cook.

Moderator 2: *In your room?*

No, in my friend's place.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Do you cook in Mayo?*

No, not at all.

Moderator 2: *Okay. For those of you that buy groceries here. What do you buy or how is it different what you buy here than what you would buy in Japan?*

I usually buy like frozen, you know frozen...just meat and bread and some vegetables because I don't cook much here...so I just buy something that can last long.

Moderator 2: *Okay. How do you know if it can last long because it is frozen?*

Yeah, and I can put things in freezer like meat, so I can use it after I freeze it.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Moderator 1: Did you ask how many times they shop here?

Moderator 2: Yeah, how often do you shop here? Very often?

Yeah...

Moderator 1: Just about...

Two or three times a week.

Once a week I do.

Yeah, me too.

Moderator 2: What do you guys cook? Do you eat differently here?

No, I cook Japanese food.

I don't like American food, it's too greasy for me.

Moderator 2: Neither do I. It is too greasy. Do you buy more fresh...the same fresh things here or do you buy frozen foods here that you cook in a Japanese style. Do you understand what I'm saying? Do you buy fresh vegetables and...

Yeah, fresh ones.

Moderator 2: And how often do you shop?

Just once a week.

Moderator 2: Just once a week and that's not a problem and things stay fresh and things like that.

Yeah, I don't cook a lot like her...

Moderator 2: Just every once in awhile, okay. As I said it is likely there are going to be many new products that are happening all the time in Japan. Many of them will be frozen foods. What do you think about that? Do you think frozen food...first of all, are you familiar...are there many frozen foods sold now in Japan?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Okay. What are they mostly like? Describe. What kind of frozen food choices could I get if I wanted or what's different about them that might be here? Do you have all the same things?*

I'm shouldn't...I'm not interested in that kind of frozen foods...I buy...my mom really doesn't like that frozen food, it's not fresh and it has little added something...

Moderator 2: *Additives?...oh, artificial things. Other comments about the frozen foods that are in Japan now?*

My mom doesn't like frozen foods either because she is a full time housewife and when she cooks she uses...but I don't know, if I have to work in Japan maybe I would buy frozen food because I can save time.

Moderator 2: *Okay. What are the frozen foods like? Are they just one item or a whole meal? Like here you can buy a whole frozen dinner where maybe you could get rice and meat and a vegetable.*

Moderator 1: *What kind of frozen food comes to mind when you think of frozen food?*

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Moderator 1: *Like what?*

Like _____.

Moderator 1: *Dumplings?*

Yeah, dumpling.

Moderator 2: *Okay. What other frozen foods?*

Moderator 1: *Do you buy them here?*

Yeah. In Japan, actually my father works for a food company so he sells frozen food...

Moderator 2: *But it's a single product. She said like frozen food dumplings she said are one thing that she knows are frozen, you know, dumplings or something like that...Ku Man Do or I know Korean frozen dumpling things. What other frozen foods? Can you get whole dinners or is it just like one item?*

One item.

Moderator 2: *Do you think people would buy whole dinners? Why or why not? ___ you're shaking your head. Would you or would people you know buy...do you know what I mean? Do you know what they have here? A whole frozen dinner? Do you ever buy them or would you?*

No.

Moderator 2: *How about in Japan? Would people buy them and why or why not? What is good or bad about them?*

They're artificial.

Moderator 2: *Why do you think that? It's real broccoli or it's real rice, it's a real dish. Do you see what I mean? Why is it artificial?*

It's not fresh.

Moderator 2: *It's frozen.. It's frozen fresh, fast you know.*

But I think you put something to keep that thing long.

Moderator 2: *You think that. I don't know if they do or not but I mean, do you have to? Can't you just freeze a fish? Yes you can. You can take a fish and put it in plastic and put it in your freezer and you can pull it out...*

But it must lose some nutrition.

Moderator 2: *Why?*

It's not fresh, that's why.

Moderator 2: *Okay, what's the difference?*

Freshness matters in Japan.

Moderator 2: *I guess so.*

It tastes not good.

Moderator 2: *Do you know? You've tried it?*

Compared for the one and the fresh one.

Moderator 2: You think so?

Is sure, is true.

Moderator 2: You're sure, all right. How about others of you?

Yeah, it's tastier from like, corn dog....

Moderator 2: Oh, that's bad American food, that's not good anywhere.

I've eaten them like here and it's frozen, I put in my microwave and um...it's so dry and tastes bad.

Moderator 2: That's dry and tastes bad when it's fresh...that's the food, the corn dog.

Moderator 1: Yeah, it tastes like...it's tastes...

Moderator 2: It tasted funny when it was frozen?

Yeah, it was like, dry, like...

Moderator 2: Okay.

(talking in Japanese)

Moderator 2: What was that?

It should not be like crunch but it feels like lack of water...

Moderator 2: If companies started putting many different frozen food dinners, and I mean whole dinners where maybe you would have maybe fried rice with vegetables or something like that and they sold them, do you think they would sell and why or why not? Who would buy them? Would it be different...would men buy them more than women? Would older people buy them more than younger? Who would more likely be interested or who would say absolutely not?

I think working mothers would buy.

Moderator 2: Would buy them...because they are busier.

Yeah.

Moderator 2: What about like your mothers? Would they be interested?

No.

Moderator 2: *No. Because of freshness? Is that why? Why would they not buy them?*

Also, I think it's not a good thing to buy ready to eat food because that means like mothers are not doing their job.

Moderator 2: *And they care about that?*

Yeah, I think so.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Do you? Do you think that's the same here in the United States?*

I think she enjoys the cooking.

Moderator 2: *Do you all enjoy cooking?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Do you think you'll enjoy cooking? Is that something you'll want to spend time on? _____you're making a face over there. Do you enjoy cooking?*

Sometimes.

Moderator 2: *How about every day? You're going to have 3 little kids and a husband who is going to come home and they're hungry....*

No.

Moderator 2: *And you will have worked all day...so what about frozen foods...do they sound better now?*

Yeah, they are sometimes convenient.

Moderator 2: *Okay. You will be seeing these different packages that will be for sale in the different stores. What things about the packages will be important to say, well, if I'm going to buy it, this is something I want to see on the package or this is something that I want the package to be? What are important things? Do you even think about packages now? Is it something you even...*

I don't know...if it looks good I will buy it.

Moderator 2: *So a picture on the package of the food. What makes it look good?*

Color.

Moderator 2: *Okay. For instance, do you prefer to see it cooked or do you want to see like the live fish? Do you know what I mean? Do you want to see the fish all cooked and showing how it's going to be on a plate or you know, a floppy fish you know, where it's very fresh? Do you think about that? Or, the raw vegetables or the cooked vegetables? Does it matter? As long as it's a good picture...you're a photojournalist...you want good pictures.*

The vegetables I will say fresh ones....

Moderator 2: *Not cooked.*

Not cooked...but I don't know about fish. I'm sure that I don't buy any fish...any frozen fish.

Moderator 2: *You won't. All right, how about for others of you? What do you look for on the packages...I mean she talked about the pictures...what other things are important? Does the packaging matter? What if they just wrap it in plastic, that's packaging...is that okay?*

No.

Moderator 2: *Why?*

Because it doesn't look good.

Moderator 2: *But if you see the stuff...what if you have, I don't know, some snow peas or something and you wrap it just in plastic.*

Maybe because I want to see some image of good food, good dinner....so, like if it's just in plastic bag it's like, I don't know...no color and kind of....

Moderator 2: *Okay. Other comments about packages. What else matters about packages? Do you care if it's big, I mean if it has a lot of packaging or a little packaging...does it matter? Does it matter what the package is made out of...whether it's plastic or if it is paper or glass or metal? Maybe some better or worse?*

Plastic is better because like for paper I think it's not safe like it is kind of dangerous...someone could put something inside...

Moderator 2: *Any other thoughts about packaging from anyone...what you like or don't like...would you even notice?*

I feel kind of it's wasting to use plastic trays, like several supermarkets have a system to recycle the trays but...

Moderator 2: *How does that work? You bring it back? For instance, the tray inside of the package and then you bring it back to the store?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Is that right?*

In Japan yes.

Moderator 1: *It's basically the Styrofoam package for the meat?*

For meat.

Moderator 2: *But you bring it back to the store. Do you care about that? I mean, you said that matters to you.*

Not really to me, to my mom.

Moderator 2: *Okay. All right. Why does it matter to her?*

Well, maybe because she lives in Tokyo and there is no space...

Moderator 2: *Oh, so you have to worry about that. For others of you, does it matter if you can recycle? Do you care? Does it?*

If I can recycle the things I use I do. I do recycle.

Moderator 2: *Why? Because you care about the world? I mean, seriously. Because the difference is, in case, or in some places in Japan you have to, right? Legally, they say you have to recycle or we won't take your trash. Do you all have to do that where you live? Do you have to recycle?*

Yes, especially, my home town is Hiroshima, it's very pretty strict rule like paper and plastic is distinguished...

Moderator 2: *Okay. Do you have to where you live in Japan?*

I do. (inaudible)

Moderator 2: *I know some...I've been to Tokyo...and you said you live where?*

I live in....

Moderator 2: *Do you have to or?...*

Yeah, we have to.

I'm from _____.

Moderator 2: *Where is that at? Is that south?*

Moderator 1: *Middle.*

Middle, yeah. We don't have to recycle but people do recycle.

Moderator 2: *How about you?*

I'm from _____.

Moderator 2: *Do you recycle? No, I have no idea where...it's in Japan somewhere.*

Yeah, we recycle.

Moderator 2: *Because you have to or want to?*

Just, it works better....want to.

Moderator 2: *Do you care? I mean will you care when you go back there? Will that make a difference if you get a package and it's easy to recycle or not?*

I think I care.

Moderator 2: *Do you care when you are here in the United States?*

No.

Moderator 2: *It's okay to put your trash here huh, but not there? Do you care? Do you think about it? You guys buy groceries? Don't think about it? Do you recycle? No? No one recycles?*

Only cans and....

Moderator 2: Because there's money...you get money back.

Yeah, that's the point because it's kind of bothering to bring things back to supermarket but if I can get money, oh, good, so everything...

Moderator 2: Okay. Any other thing that matters about packaging? We talked about the color and the picture. We talked about recycling. We talked about whether it is paper or plastic. Does anyone else care if it is paper or plastic? _____ said she is more comfortable with plastic because she thinks paper might not be as safe. Does anyone else have an opinion?

If the packaging keeps fresh or things good...

Moderator 2: How do you know that?

It protects like...I think paper is more the air it can go in, out and in...

Moderator 2: So paper is not as good, it won't keep it as fresh....

I think...

Moderator 2: Well, a lot of it is we don't really know but we're making the best guess.

Moderator 1: How about milk packages...you know, carton?

Moderator 2: Milk you say...is milk carton in Japan paper or plastic more often?

Paper. But I don't think it tastes as good as just plastic one.

Moderator 2: Okay. Any other feelings about paper or plastic or if it matters?

Moderator 1: _____ you said paper is dangerous?

Sometimes it could...it is easily to get a hole or think easy opening at the store.

Like, I want the packages to be light because it's not easy to carry...

Moderator 2: So, light weight.

Yeah, light weight and maybe because...maybe...I live in Japan and not in Tokyo, we don't have cars so we have to use our bicycles or our foot so we have to walk and I don't want to carry heavy stuff.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so light weight.*

Moderator 1: *And which did you prefer? Paper or plastic?*

Plastic.

Moderator 1: *I mean for the package....*

Plastic.

Even for milk.

Moderator 1: *I don't think we have a lot of plastic packaging.*

Moderator 2: *(Moderator 1) lets...we're actually going to show you some packages now. We'll just pull out one at a time and we're just going to get your impression. What you like about it, what you dislike about it and why you think you might buy it or somebody else might buy it or why they would not.*

Moderator 1: *So how many of you have tried the frozen food meal?*

Moderator 2: *Have you tried them here? The frozen food meals...*

The whole meal?

Moderator 2: *None of you.*

One of my friends loves it...

Moderator 2: *Why? Why do you think they like it?*

Because it's easily...after school he doesn't have to cook....

Moderator 2: *He. That's what we heard when we met with....the guys on the floor...oh, it's easy, (whick, shoo....) put it in the microwave (chi, chi)...do you think it's different with men? Do you think they would be more interested? Do men shop differently or eat differently than you all do in Japan? Do they spend as much time? Do they care as much if it is fresh? What do you think?*

Business men who live alone, they don't have time to cook or....

Moderator 2: But business women do?

No.

Moderator 2: They make the time...they find the time? What do you think? Are there differences in how men and women eat? Do you ever think about it? Question for deep thought. Do you think your husbands would eat differently or your boyfriends? Do they now?

I think it really depends on the people but my brother is working and I think he always eats out...you know...because he doesn't know how to cook, he doesn't have that much time to cook, to learn how to cook.

Moderator 2: How about your fathers? Do your fathers cook at all?

Yeah, he likes to cook.

Moderator 2: Your mother shops all the time and she stays home but your father cooks as well.

But it's for...it's a hobby for my father to cook so he buys different stuff like expensive stuff, for dinner, like greater. It's just a hobby....

Moderator 2: For others of you, do your fathers cook or your uncles or anything?

No.

Moderator 2: No, is that good? Are you glad they don't cook? No? Okay. Do you think it will be different? Do you think men will be cooking more? Will your husbands cook more than your fathers did? Will they cook some if your fathers didn't cook any. Do you want them to?

Sure.

Moderator 2: Sure. Do you hope your husband cooks? Okay. You'll cook too. Do you want your husband to cook?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: Do you think it's true? Will they?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Yeah, he will cook.*

I'll make him cook. (much laughter)

Moderator 2: *Well, that's interesting. We're going to look at some packages and we'll just take one at a time and we're just going to say, okay, this is what you might see...look at it and let's see what might be good or bad about it and what suggestions you might have. These are American products and so of course they would be in Japan. Look at it briefly and we'll just pass it around and you can see...okay.*

Moderator 1: *Same kind of...*

Moderator 2: *We'll just take these first two...*

Moderator 1: *I washed it after I ate.*

Moderator 2: *So this would be a frozen dinner. I would think probably only enough for one person unless you don't eat very much.*

Moderator 1: *So, what's your first impression of that package?*

Kind of cheesy.

Moderator 2: *What do you mean? What she said was "kind of cheesy" on tape, it wasn't very loud. What do you mean?*

Do you eat food from this tray?

Moderator 2: *You tell me...would you? Is there another tray inside there? I don't think so. No.*

Even like the picture says, the food is on a plate, I don't think many people would do it unless like....

Moderator 2: *Many people would not put it on a plate, they would eat it right out of the package...would you?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *You'd eat it right out of the package?*

Yeah. And I don't like that but I just want to save my time but it's kind of miserable to eat food from paper package.

Moderator 2: *So what would be better...put a little bowl in there?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Do others of you agree with her or does it matter? Would you eat it right out of the box? Heads are shaking yes and it won't go on tape...a few of you yes...would you eat it right out of the box? Why? You're going to be in good hotels, you're going to be around really good food all the time and you're going to go home to...*

I don't have to wash plates after that.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

Yeah, I don't have to wash either....

Moderator 2: *So why is that a good thing about it? Is that a reason why you might buy this product or still no? Have you ever bought these things?*

No.

No.

Moderator 2: *Why, why haven't you bought them? There are a lot of them here. You're busy now, it's relatively inexpensive. You don't have a lot...I see we don't like to wash dishes now....so why haven't you bought these products?*

Moderator 1: *Have you ever noticed this kind of food is on the market?*

Yes.

Moderator 2: *So you've seen them...*

Yeah, I just pass by.

Moderator 2: *Why?*

Because I don't like...I don't want to try to taste...it maybe might taste bad so I don't like that because it's a whole package so if it doesn't taste good I have to cook something all over again so...

Moderator 2: *Do you think it would be...do you think your life will be different five years from now that you might try?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Why, what will be different?*

Because I will be busier.

Moderator 2: *Busier.*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Others of you. Has anyone tried these things? Why?*

It's just scary.

Moderator 2: *What do you mean? Did you say scary?*

Yes.

Moderator 2: *This is scary food she said.*

(much laughter)

Moderator 2: *Why?*

I really care about food and I think it's not healthy for me.

Moderator 2: *Why do you think that?*

I don't....I live at the hall and all the time I have dorm food so I can get bad tastes....

Moderator 2: *You can get bad tasting dorm foods that were....*

Yeah...

Moderator 2: *What about this...first, let's talk about whether this is healthy. _____ doesn't think it's healthy. Do others of you think it's healthy or not?*

I don't think it's healthy.

Moderator 2: *Or, do you think about it? What would make you if you saw this think it was unhealthy? Because this is what I think. If you took...if I cooked rice and vegetables and I put it in here, it's the same rice and vegetables. I didn't do anything different to it. I put it in here, I froze it. Why is it now not healthy? Do you see my question? It's the same stuff.*

Yeah, but sometimes they have too much salt in it for me...it's too strong tasting.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so it was bad food to start with.*

Moderator 1: *So how about if Japanese maker makes a Japanese food and it's frozen in this package?*

This package?

Moderator 2: *Um hum.*

Japanese food like what.

Moderator 1: *Like I don't know, fried rice.*

Moderator 2: *Or noodles, maybe with noodles with vegetables or something.*

I just see like this package in Japan....

Moderator 2: *But you will. That's why we're here. So when you see it in Japan what will you...what would you like to see...what would make sense? What would be good dinners? If they're going to do it what should they put in there?*

I guess fried rice in plastic bag and....I put in and cooked again and it's better than...

Moderator 2: *What if we put fried rice in here...cook your fried rice, it's already, here you go....*

And put in microwave?

Moderator 2: *Yes.*

I don't like it.

Moderator 2: *What's the difference?*

Taste too strong...

Moderator 2: Bad?

Yeah, too bad or too dry.

Moderator 2: Okay, other comments? Anything else...let's talk about other things about this package. What is this made out of?

Paper.

Moderator 2: Is it paper, I didn't even...talk to me about this, is it safe? Will it keep it fresh? Is this a good packaging material? Does it matter?

So usually how long I'm going to keep this?

Moderator 2: You tell me, how long do you think you would?

I mean at store...

Moderator 2: Who knows, do you know how long it's been at the store? Do you really know? I mean if you buy something frozen at the store? Probably often there is a date..

Moderator 1: Maybe not.

Moderator 2: Somewhere...maybe not...yeah, it's in this code here somewhere.

New date?

Moderator 2: They want a date. Is a date important?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: Even if it's frozen?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: Why?

Can't keep it forever...no...

Moderator 2: Quite a long time. How long can you keep a frozen thing? How long?

One month.

A month.

Moderator 2: One month. Interesting...how long do you think you can keep something frozen?

Six months?

About, I don't know, I would need some kind of...even...that is not expired...it's getting spoiled and I don't want to eat it.

Moderator 2: If it's frozen though, does it change for one month to two months? You're shaking your head _____ why?

Because actually I'm taking quantity food in class right now so I know that frozen food, if it's frozen like, inspect area, things doesn't

Moderator 2: So if too long it's not good. So if you had a date that would be better, you would want a date. Okay.

I used to check date in Japan.

Moderator 1: For frozen food?

Yeah.

When it's made...

When it will expire...

Moderator 2: Oh, when it's made...Let's look and see if it's even on here, if it is it's not easy to find. So, what else, you want a date because you guys think this is going to be old. I think there is something on here but it's not easy to tell. What else is important? What other information do you want on the package or what other type of packaging is important? First of all, let's talk about, does this seem...you would cook it right in there. Does the material change how it tastes? Do you know what I mean? Is it better...is this going to be fine, this paper won't make it taste different than if it was in plastic or if you just cooked the same thing on a plate?

I think it does. Milk is in a paper carton and then the milk smells like paper.

Moderator 2: *Do you think so? Okay. Anything else about this package that you would want to know? Is this easy to store? Is this a good shape?*

Uh huh.

Yeah.

Pile up.

Easy to store.

Moderator 2: *Okay, easy to store, to pile up. What are some bad shapes or what things would be less convenient? This is a good one. What would be bad? Easy to store in your freezer. What do you keep in your freezer?*

Moderator 1: *Yes, I wanted to ask.*

Moderator 2: *If you don't have these, what's in your freezer now, at home, in Japan? What's in your mom's freezer?*

Moderator 1: *Do you use the freezer?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *For ice cubes? What else, what is in there?*

Moderator 1: *For ice cream?*

Yeah.

Frozen meat.

In Japan or here.

Moderator 2: *In Japan...or what will you use it for when you go back there?*

My mom used for...she bought a lot of meat at one time from good source and we keep it in freezer.

Moderator 2: *For how long?*

About a week or two.

Moderator 2: *Oh, not very long then.*

Moderator 1: *And she goes to shopping every day?*

For like things that she really needs for today's dinner or...

Moderator 2: *Okay. Others of you, what's in your freezer? What's in your freezer at home in Japan?*

Ice cream.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Ice cream. Anything else? Ice cream is not food.*

Oh, sometimes frozen meat.

Moderator 2: *Sometimes meat, okay. Fish?*

No.

Moderator 2: *Not fish. Okay, that's interesting.*

Moderator 1: *Yeah, you can buy a lot of it fresh.*

Moderator 2: *You can't here, fresh fish is terrible here and it's really tough to get. ____ what's in your freezer at home?*

Frozen food but nobody eats it.

Moderator 2: *Nobody eats it.*

Even though my father is working for the company, he brings some stuff but we don't like frozen so we just keep it like in there and whenever I go home I just throw away because my mom can't do it, she thinks it's just kind of wasting....

Moderator 2: *Which it is but that's okay since you don't...*

Because the date is expired...she just keep them and forgot about....

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

When I'm living alone like by myself, I cook some vegetables like mixed vegetables....

Moderator 2: *In the freezer...*

Corn and....

Moderator 2: *Fresh or did you cook them? Did you cook them and then freeze it?*

Moderator 1: *Or you cooked or made special.*

Both. Like spinach, I boiled and then wrapped and froze. It's convenient for especially for if in a _____.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Any other things about this package that you like or dislike? Like here you go, here's your package. I mean, if you are going to buy this food, if you are going to buy some frozen dinners what's the best package to put it in? You like the shape...what are some other things. Let's look at some other ones and see if you like other things. Did you have a comment?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Is it the right size? Is it enough?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *See, it wouldn't be for meat but...*

I think it good to have name of what's inside to know.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Explain what's inside.*

Because we pile up them.

Moderator 2: *Oh, I understand, okay, have it on the side of the box what's inside so if they're piled up in your freezer you can see.*

Uh huh. And also, if there was nutrition facts. I don't think many Japanese food have this.

Moderator 2: *Oh, it tells the salt and the fat and calories and that type of stuff. What's that?*

Moderator 1: *It's not a law.*

Moderator 2: *Oh, it's not a law. Here's another one, the same type of thing. Pull out a couple more and we'll see.*

Moderator 1: *Oh, this is a little better to open it you just rip this off and open it easy.*

Moderator 2: *Does that matter?*

Moderator 1: *Does it matter?*

Moderator 2: *Does it matter much how they open? Do you think these types of products will be more expensive, less expensive? I mean if you are going to buy this do you save money or is it more expensive than if you were just going to make it yourself to buy fresh stuff.*

I thought they were expensive but when I checked out the prices it was...they were cheap.

Moderator 2: *Okay, so you thought it was expensive until you knew. Would you think this would be cheap or expensive.*

How much is it?

Moderator 2: *What do you think? Guess.*

Moderator 1: *How much do you pay for it?*

Moderator 2: *No this is a wonderful roast sirloin with noodles and vegetables and beef. This is the Budget Gourmet.*

Three dollars.

Moderator 2: *A dollar, fifty.*

Moderator 1: *Yeah, this is kind of expensive.*

Moderator 2: *Half, half of what you said. See this is a bargain, you should buy 2.*

Moderator 1: *I bought it for about 99 cents, 89 cents.*

Moderator 2: *How about one dollar. Now are you interested? Is cost important? Is that something that makes a difference of what you buy because of how cheap it is? Will it be when you are in Japan? Now maybe you are poor students, more so but, you'll have lots of money when you go back and start to work, right?*

Moderator 1: *How about this much?*

Moderator 2: *This is very different. This is spaghetti pasta with meatballs. Comments. Good or bad?*

Looks more familiar to me.

Moderator 2: *Why?*

Because some Japanese products do the same thing...

Moderator 2: *With an inner package like this?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Is that better or worse than just...this one has no inner package.*

Yeah, better.

Moderator 2: *Why? What is better about this? Just that you're familiar? Honestly, why do you think this looks better?*

Just we think that tastes like paper, just thinking about...but this doesn't like smell or nothing so...

Moderator 1: *Actually this one is made of paper.*

Paper?

Moderator 1: *Yeah, paper tray.*

Oh, I thought its plastic.

Moderator 2: *Do you like this extra tray? Why is that good or bad? What do you like about it?*

I still feel like just eat out of the tray...I don't know, I don't like that.

Moderator 2: *Kind of primitive? Do you know what I mean by primitive? Not sophisticated? Simple?*

Maybe.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Is this better? You're making a face over there. Are you getting really hungry...what do you think? Not interested?*

I'm just...I'm thinking...that's why my face is like this.

Moderator 2: *What would you think? Are you thinking? What are you thinking?*

I don't know, it looks better, like more tasty.

Moderator 2: *Why? Why more tasty than this?*

It looks more expensive.

Moderator 2: *Okay, it looks more expensive with the inner packaging.*

It's more safety.

Moderator 2: *You think it's safer. Okay, why?*

Because it is wrapped twice.

Moderator 2: *Okay. Other things. How about recycling, would that matter? Do you know what I mean, is this more to recycle? Do you care? You have more paper, you have more stuff.*

Maybe easier to recycle than this because it's separated and then if you want to recycle this after tear this up and again...I'm just so lazy....

Moderator 2: *No, that's more work than people would do here. We'll look at some more things. How about the color...we didn't ask that...is this picture, this is red and white pasta...what colors are good?*

Red.

Moderator 2: *You like red, red food. Okay. Any other comments?*

Doesn't look like tasty. I don't eat...

Moderator 2: *Because you don't like pasta like this or this picture?*

I like pasta....

Moderator 2: *Not this pasta. Okay.*

I want more green....

Moderator 2: *Yes, this is #3 spaghetti with meatballs...doesn't look right...*

Too red.

Moderator 2: *Too red. Other comments?*

The picture is too white.

Moderator 2: *Okay, all right. Any other comments? Are you hungry? Do you want to....(inaudible). Now we have a bar-b-cue style chicken, #4. Does this look good? What about the box? It's a whole dinner. You come home from a long day of work and pop it in the microwave. What do you think? Have you had dinners like this? This is very, very common in the United States. TV dinners they call them. There are lots of them. Many people eat this every night.*

(much laughter)

Moderator 2: *Lots of grimaces...they are laughing at us.*

I was surprised when I stayed at American family...they just...ding...

Moderator 2: *Uh, huh...why were you surprised.*

Because I had never seen that kind of food before and those are ____ and unhealthy...they just serve them for their kids.

Moderator 2: *Did they serve it right in the tray?*

Uh huh.

Moderator 2: *What do you think about that? ____ is laughing again. What's that?*

For me, paper is like...we need more good food...

Moderator 2: *Maybe it's really good food. Why don't you think it's really good food?*

It has the fried chicken and corn and what else? It doesn't have any vegetable.

Moderator 2: *Corn is a vegetable...potatoes are vegetables.*

Green. Green vegetables, beans.

Moderator 2: *Well, it could have beans instead of corn, I mean sometimes you would have a green vegetable. What if it was chicken and green beans and...corn.*

They would need to get like much variety...many kinds of....

Moderator 2: *You could have another one that had spinach or something. So you don't think it's healthy.*

Maybe we don't think that's the food to eat...we cook things and then use a lot of kind of food in one dish.

Moderator 2: *But if you were in Japan though they would, you see, this is bad American food, maybe they would have bad Japanese food and make that. You know, tell me, rice and maybe some vegetables and maybe I don't know, chicken or fish or something like that. Would that be better? Then you might buy it?*

Maybe, Japanese...but still.

Moderator 2: *But still...okay. How about the package itself? Do you like this? Would you do this for your kids? Even if you don't want to eat it because you don't think it's very good. ____ you mentioned that American people...and you were right...it's very easy...you have 2 or 3 kids, they're hungry, they're picky, kids are terrible sometimes...you know, you come home...what do you want...I want chicken, the other one wants fish, put it in the microwave for a few minutes, hand it to them. Will you do that to your kids? You know, seriously. You're working...*

It's not a good education for children.

Moderator 2: *It's not a good education for children.*

If they want chicken are you going to feed them chicken? I don't think it's good way, they need variety.

Moderator 2: *Talk to me in 10 years when your...I have a 4 year old and you're tired and you just want him quiet. What do you think? Would you do it for your kids? I mean, if it's Japanese food, some are vegetables and different things like that. Who would eat them in Japan, who would eat this type of thing?*

Single person.

Moderator 2: *Single person. Well, you're all single right now, none of you seem really excited.*

Single person who doesn't live with his or her family.

Moderator 2: *Will you live with your family when you go back until you get married or something like that? Do you think so? Will you live with your family? You lived alone before though.*

Yeah, for 2 years.

Moderator 2: *Was it good?*

For me but....

Moderator 2: *But you still ate, you know, you still cooked...you said you did..*

Some...I'd rather go out to go eat.

Moderator 1: *Are there other choices besides going out in Japan?*

(inaudible)

Moderator 2: *Like is there take-out food choices in Japan? Is that one thing you would do? What instead...if you want something that is convenient, you're busy whether you are single or whatever, you don't want to cook stuff. What are your choices. You can go to a restaurant we know, sometimes that's expensive, sometimes it takes a lot of time...what other choices do you have?*

Buy food at convenience stores like 7-11.

Moderator 2: *But what can you get there? The same thing you get here? You can buy these there.*

Also but there, still there are some cooked food on separate plates, we can choose like each dishes....

Moderator 2: *But it's already cooked.*

You can keep it like 5 days or 1 week....no from it's made...

Moderator 2: *You do that?*

Yeah, a rice boil wrapped with plastic.

Moderator 2: *Is that better than this?*

Yeah, it's better.

Moderator 2: Why? It's already cooked, it's the same stuff. Think about it. Why do you think it's different? Because you know, they probably freeze this at a very cold temperature, they freeze it very quickly. My guess is they probably cook it and they freeze it in minutes, right?

I prefer to get that rice bowl because I like it much better than that.

Moderator 2: How do you know, have you had this?

No, but I don't really like American food.

Moderator 2: But it's going to be Japanese food...if they took the same rice bowl food but put it in one of these containers...

But Um, maybe taste different...maybe still have too much salt for me and too much taste for me.

Moderator 2: So they should put on here "no added salt", "no extra fat". Okay. Anything else about the container. Any other...

Moderator 1: The difference between these packages is this is not a box and this is in a box...does that make a difference?

No.

Moderator 1: How about the...pouches...

Moderator 2: Oh, the areas, 3...do you like that? Do you like that?

Moderator 1: See, this has 3 kinds of foods this one, like this.

Moderator 2: Do you understand what he says...you can have your corn here, your potatoes here and your chicken here. Is that better or is it better to have it all open.

No, that's better.

Moderator 2: It's better. They like the compartments. Okay. This is another a different one. This is the same food which is interesting, chicken, corn and potatoes, basic American food. Which one looks better or worse? The first one, the Banquet. Why? Why does the Banquet look better than the Food Club one? Do others agree? What?

Because of the picture...

The picture...

Moderator 2: But they both show corn, bread, or corn, potatoes and chicken...what about the picture Miss Photo Journalist...what about that, I mean what do you like?

Looks more real.

Moderator 2: Looks more real, okay.

And for me it looks more 3 dimensional.

Moderator 2: They had a better lens. Other comments? Do you think this one looks better or this one? Which one? You can disagree and say you guys are wrong. Does one look better?

This one use more red so red makes us hungrier, I don't know but....

Moderator 2: That's a different Master's thesis but...no, that's true...any other comments about the boxes or any other things? See I like this one better because it's bigger, you get more. Any other comments about these packages? Any other things you would want to know?

Moderator 1: How about these? Do you think it's different or...

I like that.

Moderator 1: This one?

Moderator 2: Do you want to feel it? Here, feel it. More? Anything different? Again, this must be what (Moderator 1) likes....chicken, mashed potatoes, corn...did you think about that? All 3 of these, chicken, mashed potatoes and corn.

Moderator 1: I made a _____.

Moderator 2: Now, that's just what you like (Moderator 1).

Moderator 1: This one even has a brownie.

Moderator 2: Guess who this is for guys...yes, see the little alligator...this is what you saw like your friends? My daughter, we cook a lot but we have some...kind of give them

to her but of course she eats immediately desert first so I take it out and she can't have that until she eats the other bad food and then she can have it.

I feel like they are like....airplane food.

Moderator 2: *Airplane food? And is that a good thing or a bad thing?*

Bad thing.

Moderator 2: *A bad thing. I just heard on the news that one of the airlines is going to start having much better food, they're going to spend much more money on their food because that is one way they can have a competitive advantage over other companies.*

Moderator 1: *Did you like it? This one? This one? Which one do you like?*

I like better because it has flowers....

Moderator 2: *Oh, she likes the design on the tray.*

I like white one.

Moderator 1: *Because of the color? How about that? This one is white.*

I like it better.

Moderator 1: *Why you didn't like this one?*

(inaudible)

Moderator 1: *Made of paper.*

Moderator 2: *What are some suggestions, what are some things that you like, I mean, we're showing bad American food here...maybe they're going to put better Japanese foods, healthier and they're going to tell you this is healthy, just like your mom makes and you know, they can put on there that it's low salt or low fat or no added salt, no added fat, fresh vegetables, fresh fish, you know, quickly frozen, good for you food. What should the package be like? What would make you believe it or be more interested? What would you like? Any suggestions? If you were trying to sell this stuff in Japan what would you say they should do? Would you say put a date on it? Make it recyclable, put something that says recyclable...what else matters?*

A good picture...good color.

Moderator 2: *A good picture with good color...okay...this is cooked and they show it on a plate with other things.*

Moderator 1: *This one is actually...*

Moderator 2: *Yeah, they show this one right on the tray...is that smart or is it better on a plate...see the difference. Here they show the food how you get it...here they show the food on a plate.*

On the plate.

Moderator 2: *On the plate much better...even though you might eat it right out of the tray.*

Um hum...and also it's better not to put weird color on the back, like there is no purple food...that kind of color is not good.

Moderator 2: *Okay.*

We can imagine like, oh, how....like, we can expect more of it. Actually, like after I open it I go, disappoint.

Yeah, kind of disappointed.

Moderator 2: *That's why I buy 2, that's what I said. But it's a nice, big box so, just give them a bigger box you say for the amount of food you get. This is a Hungry Man, you get more in this one. Other comments about the packages...do you have more?*

Moderator 1: *Yeah.*

Moderator 2: *Okay, see if you can think of anything else about these. Oh, this has a little bowl, a hard plastic bowl. And some of them you can buy it's very hard, it's like something that you can keep. Do you know what I mean, it is very hard. Is that better or different? This is more like what you might actually get, oriental style dumplings and fried rice. Chicken and potatoes....Is that better, in a hard bowl? Does that make a difference.*

Yeah, I prefer this one.

Moderator 2: *You like the harder bowl instead of plastic or instead of paper.*

Moderator 1: *Do you like this one better than the paper stuff?*

Yeah.

Moderator 1: You do?....and you do?

Moderator 2: They like the plastic bowls and the harder...why, what about this is better, is more appealing?

Safer, it's safer....I don't know, it's just...

Moderator 2: Because it's thicker? What do you mean?

It doesn't absorb any food like if it's paper.

Moderator 2: Oh, okay. How about the color? I've seen them in white or black. Is the black fine? Even black?

I prefer white one.

Moderator 2: You prefer white to black, do you know why? You don't have to know why, you can say, no, I don't know why...it's plain, I like white. Any other comments?

I like black one because whiter thing it looks cheap...like you can disguise the material....

Moderator 2: We're going to...one question that I have and we're going to go right around the room. When you are in Japan, a couple years from now most of you will be back...do you think you will buy these type of products and I'll assume Japanese food is in there...why will you buy them or how often will you eat them? I mean, is this going to be something that you just have once in awhile or what? What do you think? Do you think you'll buy this type of product, frozen food dinners in Japan?

Yeah.

Moderator 2: Okay, for what. I mean, will you buy it for every day? Is this what you're going to eat? Why will you buy them? What about it is good?

I don't know, to cook I can save my time.

Moderator 2: Okay, so it's fast.

Yes. And, (inaudible)....

Moderator 2: Okay, what do you mean?

I don't have to wash dishes...

Moderator 1: *How about disposal? It's one way package so you...*

Yeah. I can recycle them.

Moderator 2: *Do you think, like how often...how many times a week might you eat something like this?*

Two or three times.

Moderator 2: *Okay. And do you have any suggestions of things they should think about if they're going to try to sell these products. I mean, if you were (Moderator 1)'s company and had to make these packages for this food, what would you do?*

If you want to sell these products to young, single, working woman you had better put a (inaudible) kind of picture...great food and then low fat and that kind of things.

Moderator 2: *What if you're trying to sell it to men? Anything different? Or if you're trying to sell it to older people? Are older people going to buy this at all?*

Moderator 1: *Their children will have left...just them alone themselves.*

Moderator 2: *Like do your parents eat differently now that you're gone if you don't have brothers and sisters at home? Do you know what I mean, than when you're there? You're shaking your head.*

My mom lives now with her mother-in-law, just 2 of them. They don't eat that much like and my grandma doesn't like (inaudible) food, so you know, my mom has to cook something very Japanese, something old.

Moderator 2: *Any other comments? _____ how about you? When you go back to Japan do you think you'll buy this type of product? Frozen food dinners?*

I think this is worst case because I think if I don't have time, I think I just go to community store...

Moderator 2: *And buy what?*

Buy something to eat.

Moderator 2: *But not this?*

Not this.

Moderator 2: Why? What's bad about this?

I just don't like the taste.

Moderator 2: Okay.

I think I will just for emergency.

Moderator 2: Why only for emergency? Same thing?

Because I don't want to eat those frozen foods often (inaudible) every day and...

Moderator 2: Okay. ____?

Just like her. For emergency food.

I don't know...I believe that there is something harmful...it just is not healthy. Because my mom raised me right this way.

Moderator 2: Okay. Do you think other people are different than you? I mean, if you are back in Japan do you think they will sell? Will this stuff sell? Who is going to buy it? Maybe people who aren't as well educated, will that make a difference? Do they eat differently, do you know?

Maybe if your mom works, she doesn't have time to cook so her kids must be used to this kind of food.

Moderator 2: Okay, so maybe the kids cook for themselves. Do you think men will buy this product more? What do they do, do they eat out? Do they have to cook themselves, they're not all married? Or, do they go to their moms and make their mom cook? ____, will you buy this type of products?

I don't know...like, if the supermarket, they have bargain, sales...I won't buy a lot but, otherwise I won't use a lot.

Moderator 2: Okay. Any suggestions? Any other things to think about for packaging to make this more interesting to people so maybe you would buy them more? Any other things to think about that we haven't talked about that you care about? Any more questions, (Moderator 1)?

Moderator 1: I have one more package. This one....this one is just, this one has....

Moderator 2: *And it's called Healthy Choice...this is good for you. Don't you think so? See...bar-b-cue sauce and potatoes and corn again...they're different potatoes but...*

We don't trust company.

Moderator 2: *You don't trust company...what?*

Like the more they say good stuff...

Moderator 1: *How about big brand name?*

Moderator 2: *Would that make a difference? Who is a big brand name we talked about this before...in Japan....*

Moderator 1: *(Inaudible)*

Moderator 2: *Did you hear what he said?*

(laughter)

Moderator 1: *(speaking in Japanese).*

Maybe we trust Japanese companies more than American companies.

Moderator 2: *Oh, because they are more honest in their advertising? Do you believe that? They'll tell you...if they say it's healthy it really is healthy...and if you believe that...is it true? Do you believe that?*

I will check their (inaudible)...

Moderator 2: *Do you understand it though...I mean, it doesn't mean anything to me if it says 12 grams of salt...is that salty or not...or you know, how much sodium? Do you understand? How much salt is a lot of salt? Do you know? I don't know you know, how much sodium if it says...do you know. It has a number there...like this says it has 490 milligrams of sodium. Is that a lot or a little?*

Moderator 1: *This says 20....*

Moderator 2: *21% of your daily value. Does that mean anything?*

Moderator 1: *That much more?*

Moderator 2: How do they get you to buy it the first time?

They have like cost...with the sales...

Moderator 2: They have that in Japan too? And you try that when you're walking around the store?

(laughter...uh huh, uh huh)...

Moderator 2: Any other comments or anything else? Moderator 1, do you have anymore questions?

Moderator 1: Yes...do you like made of plastic or the paper? You said plastic is better...what did you say? This is plastic, this is paper.

Moderator 2: This paper over that paper or the hard plastic over...

Moderator 1: That one...

No, because I didn't think this was made of paper...

Moderator 2: It has like a plastic cover over it.

If there is plastic coating on this....

I don't trust it...I like this color...

Moderator 2: They don't like the black too much.

I like the packaging for those two.

I prefer that one...the plastic one and color in white.

I like plastic one...paper was cheaper...

Moderator 1: Did you care about the recycling?

Yeah, I do.

Moderator 1: And which do you think is better to recycle or to just dispose of it?

Recycling paper right there...I don't know which...actually, I don't have many idea about recycling which is either...if you said paper is easier to recycle I would prefer paper over but...

Moderator 1: *But you said plastic is easy to recycle...what do you think?*

Moderator 2: *What if it has the recycle thing like...do you see the little triangle? Do they have this in Japan, do you have a little symbol, a picture or....is that helpful, tells you how to recycle? Does it matter?*

Moderator 1: *Do you think you will recycle these or just dispose...*

Maybe it depends on how often I get this you know so....if I live alone do you mean? Maybe I would just throw them away....

Moderator 1: *How about...*

If I can bring them to store and the store collect them to recycle I do but if I have to do something else, I have to maybe bring them to some place else then I don't usually go...

Moderator 2: *So if it's convenient you'll recycle.*

I don't know.

Moderator 1: *How about your moms? Do your mom care about those? Which one do you think she would choose?*

She doesn't care because the box doesn't say the content is plastic.

Moderator 1: *What if they say it's made of plastic or paper or you could see?*

I don't think my mom would care because she thinks she can recycle both of them.

Moderator 1: *Any other comment?*

On packaging or....yes, if you want any kind of stock in Japan you have to change Japanese society.

Moderator 2: *Uh huh and how do we do that? 2 minutes, tell me how, how do I change society in Japan. Isn't it happening anyway? Do you think in 20 years is it going to be...you'll see lots of this?*

Yeah, I think so.

Moderator 2: *Talk to his company, their hoping so. Do you see changes now in Japanese society? Is it happening? Like what things? What's different now than 20 years ago or what will be different 15 years from now or 10 years from now...what will be different? You want husbands who cook?*

And also, Japanese people have to make lunch box....

Moderator 2: *To take to their office?*

For kids. And then if kids get frozen food it's not good. Like, your mom.... your mom....

Moderator 2: *You mean it's embarrassing?*

Yeah, like your mom is not taking care of you.

It might me in 20 years when more women work so...

Moderator 2: *Could you send this to...you know, something like this, give to your kid to take to school?*

(inaudible)

Moderator 2: *What? It's got a nice little alligator...maybe they have a toy inside you know...so, no, you wouldn't do that.*

No.

Moderator 2: *See, I think most kids here eat at school, you don't send lunch. But you would send that in a minute, a lunchable or something like that. You won't feed your kids this then. Would you feed your husband this? Would you be more likely to say, here, I'm busy...the kids got a good lunch but bon appetite...do you think they care as much? Do men care as much if it's fresh if it's healthy or do women care more?*

Women care more.

Moderator 2: *Women care more.*

I think for men having lunch with their colleagues kind of...on business so they eat out, they don't eat this.

Moderator 2: *Anything else? Any other comments?*

Moderator 1: *I have more packaging questions. I would like to ask you which one is the best package...inside of this, inside package...this is just a box and a little bit easier to open. Paper tray. This one and this type of one and this type of one are plastic, and this one. Which one do you like best?*

Moderator 2: *Well, let's give her the worst one. Which is the worst one?*

That one.

Moderator 2: *Do we agree? The paper ones are the worst ones, the least interesting? Okay. Then, paper but with no compartments...*

Moderator 1: *Or this one, the plastic one?*

I like that one.

I don't like the flat one.

Moderator 2: *So these are the next ones that are the weakest...the worst ones?*

Yeah.

Moderator 2: *Okay. You like the plastic ones for that, the hard plastic ones and plastic with compartments the best. So plastic is better, compartments are better, thicker is better. Do you agree?*

Yeah, yes, yeah.

Moderator 2: *And white would be better if this were in white or off white? But fresh is best on a china plate at a nice restaurant. Anything else (Moderator 1)?*

Moderator 1: *How about the outside box...the color or picture? What color did you like it? Red or white? Orange? Purple?*

Moderator 2: *Which ones...this is the worst one? They don't like the Food Club. They don't like the Food Club fried chicken.*

I don't like the purple one too.

Moderator 2: *They don't like the purple one but that's for a little kid. Do people take their little kids shopping with them? Do you know what I mean? Do the kids have choices? And say....oh...you know...you know like here for cereal and stuff there are*

prizes and they have to have fruit loops or like this, you get an alligator on there and it's purple and little kids like purple, Barney and stuff like that. Do you guys know who Barney is? I know, you will know, you will learn these things. They don't like the purple one as much but that's for kids. These are better? You didn't like the red, you don't like...you like red color but you didn't like the spaghetti...right here, number 3.

Moderator 1: How about black or green?

Moderator 2: Black is mixed.

I like the number 7 I guess.

Moderator 2: You like the green...the Healthy Choice.

Yes, the color is brighter.

Moderator 2: It's a food color too, purple is not a food color. That's what they said, there's no purple food. Any other comments?

Moderator 1: What kind of name do you want for the frozen food? What kind of word makes it better.

Moderator 2: This one says Healthy Choice, this one says Hungry Man, this says Fun Feast, this is an Italian name, Lombardo's, there's probably no Mr. Lombardo but...

Moderator 1: What do you think?

Moderator 2: Do you think Food Club, Lean Cuisine, or Banquet...what words are better to you?

I think that one.

Moderator 2: Healthy Choice....okay.

Maybe homestyle.

Moderator 2: Homestyle...okay, homestyle, healthy choice. How about Hungry Man?

It's for a man...

Moderator 2: What's that...for a hungry man or a hungry woman. Fun Feast?

For kids.

Moderator 2: *For a kid, okay. How about Food Club. What does this make you think? Like which ones would you think are the more expensive ones? Which are the cheaper ones? Do these cost the same? Which one do you think is more expensive or less expensive.*

The Healthy Choice is probably more expensive.

Moderator 2: *Healthy Choice, I'm sorry...Healthy Choice is probably more? Which is the least expensive? Food Club? Okay. How about this one, this is Budget Gourmet, what does that tell you?*

Cheap.

Moderator 2: *Cheap and good. Any other suggestions? If you were in Japan what would you do...so we should say something that is healthy, doesn't have fat, doesn't have salt, any other things? The marketing people....*

I think Japanese people prefer an interesting name....

Moderator 2: *What did you say? _____, okay.*

Like in Japan, (inaudible)....like, if there is a famous chef at a famous hotel they can use the name.

Moderator 2: *Oh, okay, Benihana? I know famous European chefs, Jacques, Julia Child...would that work? But they're really high fat, Julia Child is. Are there famous Japanese chefs? Name some. You named one, who are some famous Japanese chefs that are at wonderful restaurants.*

Ah.... he is very famous and there is a name after his name, stuff named after his name. (speaking in Japanese - inaudible)

In Japanese package, like his picture on package...

Moderator 2: *That could be so expensive, he probably wants a lot of money but that would be good...then you might buy it?*

Yeah, I might...

Moderator 2: *Because he's cute or because it's good stuff?*

No, actually I like him so I read about him and I don't know, I'm just interested in him.

Moderator 2: *Now what's his name again?*

Moderator 2: *That's way too tough. Any other suggestions? If you wanted some more of these things....you might all come back and get an MBA and you might have to do this type of thing so what would you do? How do you sell this stuff?*

Maybe names could be something that reminds you of home, atmosphere... or mom something....

Moderator 2: *Okay, just like mom made, from mama's kitchen. Okay. Any other things? Any other comments or thoughts? Thank you all, interesting. It was very different with the men in here last time and the next time when we do this (Moderator 1) is meeting with some older Japanese women like your mother's age and see what they say....like no way....never. But they are Japanese women who are here just for like 1 year or 2 years with their husbands and then they're going back to Japan...from Detroit...so we'll see what they say. Many of the men were like, I don't care as much, I need to get full. You know, it's easy, it's fast and it's cheap. It's very interesting for me because (Moderator 1) and I were talking about and he's been at my home a couple of times, many of my friends who are professionals eat this every day or pizza or can of soup or instant food, a sandwich...never, never cook, many friends who even have a lot of money and have time and stuff like that...*

They don't care about health?

Moderator 2: *They might work out, maybe they exercise a lot but they eat terribly and you know, very few vegetables and never fresh fish, never...it's tough to get fresh fish around here but you can, you just have to look. There are a couple places that have better fish but you know, beef and potatoes, milk, a few vegetables...fatty foods, they just don't care or think about it.*

My friend's mom came here about 3 years ago, during the first year she got attracted to these kind of new products because we don't have those kind of things in Japan, she tried almost every kind of food like anything, any kind of food and then she got bored and she went back to her Japanese food.

Moderator 2: *See, I use this for emergency food. It's in my freezer. If I'm really hungry and I'm really tired...and my wife is a lawyer, she works very hard, you know, we both cook but we cook a lot and stuff like that but we have a lot of friends who every day come home and go through the freezer and they have 20 of them...especially for kids you know. My daughter probably eats more of it...kids are...you'll see, kids are a lot of work.*

Moderator 1: Okay. Thank you very much.

It was fun...

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Number 3 - Transcription: Housewives without children (translated from Japanese conversation)

Thank you everyone for coming today. I would like to conduct a focus group. First, let me explain what a focus group is. It basically aims to obtain consumers reactions or opinions to a new product before a company actually puts it on the market, and also to have consumers discuss what will be the most effective way to sell the product or what the problems might be. Another example is, in an election, candidates use this procedure in order to improve their image by gathering voter's opinions. It has become popular in the United States in the past fifteen years. In contrast, in Japan, focus groups are used in investigations with high school girls to get current trends. The theme of this focus group discussion is "frozen food products". My name is Tanizaki. I'm a packaging major in the master's program at Michigan State University. The discussion of this focus group will be used as the main part of my thesis. Among various types of frozen food products, I have chosen "TV dinners" as our topic. Are you familiar with these? Some are nodding and some are not. What about you? You are not nodding.

As far as I know, it is something in which rice and a type of main dish are served on a plate with divisions.

Right. It is ready made, and you can easily heat it up by using a microwave or an conventional oven.

I haven't seen any before.

Is that so? They aren't often found in Japan's food industry.

Well, it seemed that they were sold, but I'm not sure if they were popular.

On the contrary to the situation in Japan, they have been popular in the United States for more than three decades. Frozen food products were not quite popular in Japan, although we could find retort food. Nowadays, light has been shed on frozen food products and Japanese food companies are going to manufacture these types of products. Then a question arises; what is the role of the packaging? Based on the fact that packaging affects purchasing, I would like to examine how packaging makes a contribution to the sale.

In addition, there are a couple of things that I would like you to keep in mind. First, speak clearly one at a time and try not to use non-verbal expressions for the purpose of transcription. And try to speak out, if you have the same or any other opinions. Second,

please do not hesitate to express yourself. All of you have an advantage over the consumers in Japan with respect to the fact that you are familiar with frozen whole meal products. I consider you representatives of those who have been exposed to the advanced market of these types of frozen products.

Do you have any questions?

Let's get started. Could you briefly tell us your name, how long you have been in the United States and how long you will be. I assume that your husbands are office workers. Is that correct? Some of them might be college students and staying at home (laughter), or own a home business. Also, could you explain how often and where you went grocery shopping in Japan in comparison to your shopping frequency in the United States.

My name is _____. I have been here for two and half years. I'm not quite sure when I'm going back to Japan, but I'll be staying here probably for the next four or five years. When I was in Japan, I used to shop every day, but here, twice a week.

What kind of store did you go to in Japan? To a big supermarket?

No, there was a small super market near my place and I could purchase most of the things there.

I've been here for one year and eight months. I'll probably be going back to Japan at the end of this year.

It's quite a short stay, isn't it?

This is the fifth year for my husband, though. I came over here the fifth day after we got married. I used to shop in Japan, but it was not that of a typical housewife shopping.

I see. How often do you go shopping here?

Once a week.

Thank you.

My name is _____. I've been here for three months. When I was in Japan, I went shopping almost everyday.

What type of shop did you go to? Did you go to a big supermarket?

It was located only thirty seconds away from my place (laughter). They lowered their prices in the evening, so I kept an eye on that and went there every day. (laughter) Here, I go shopping once or twice a week. As for my future plan, I don't think we are going back to Japan unless I insist to do so, due to the fact that he has changed his occupation to an American company.

My name is _____. I've been here for ten years. I came over here as a student when my parents moved here for their business. I ended up staying here and getting married. So my experience as a housewife is only limited to the United States. I go shopping two or three times a week. And I think I'll be here for the next two or three years, but it could be longer.

My name is _____. I've here for five or six years. I was in Texas thirty years ago, and in total, I have lived in the U.S. about fifteen years. There were TV dinners at that time. As for shopping in Japan, I went every other day to a supermarket that was near my place. Here, I go shopping once or twice a week. I'll probably be going back to Japan this year.

My name is _____. This is my tenth year in the United States. I have no idea when I'll be going back to Japan. It could be next year, or two or three years later, but I don't think we'll go back to Japan this year. As for shopping, I went every two or three days in Japan, and here, I shop once or twice a week.

I've been here for more than thirty years now. I came over here as a student. When I was in Japan, I was an office worker and went shopping on the way home almost every day for just myself. Basically I go shopping once a week here, but I usually forget to buy something, such as eggs or milk. So, I would say I go shopping twice or three times a week. I'm not planning to go back to Japan. When I reach retirement age, I might be going back to my parents if I can not find any place.

My name is _____. I've been here for one year and one month. I was in Seattle about twenty five years ago and I lived there for three years. I lived in New York when I was a student. So, this is my third stay in the United States. I go shopping once or twice a week here. When I was in Japan, I was quite busy, and I shopped two or three times a week, not every day.

My name is _____. I've been here for two and a half years. Basically my shopping style is the same both in Japan and in the United States. I purchase most of the things once a week, then additionally buy a couple of things two or three times a week. So, in total, I shop two or three times a week. I have no idea when I'll be going back to Japan since it's totally up to my husband's company, but I think I'll probably be staying here for four or five more years.

My name is _____. I've been here for thirty-four years. I got married in Japan and seven days later, (laughter) I came to the States. At that time, the TV dinner was in boom. As far as I remember, the TV dinner could already be found. My husband told me how convenient TV dinners were, based on his experience when he was a student. Basically, I go shopping once a week, but I also usually forget to buy something, I would say I go two or three times a week then. Especially during winter, I go to Meijer, which is near my place, and walk around for exercise. I'm not planning to go back to Japan.

My name is _____. This is my third stay and I've been here for almost two years. The last two times, I was here with my children. Since my children liked TV dinners very

much, I often bought them for my children. But now, I seldom purchase them for my husband and me. As for shopping in Japan, I used to do that once or twice a week. Here, basically once a week. On the occasion that we have guests for the weekends, I have to go shopping on the weekends, so I would say, I shop once or twice a week .

Thank you. Some of you said that you would not be going back to Japan. What about your food habits? Do you eat Japanese food, or American?

(everyone) Of course Japanese.

So, basically I would like you consider yourselves representatives of Japanese consumers. Now let's get to the point. I would like you not to speak all at once, but one by one. First of all, let's talk about your general habits of purchasing food. When you purchase food, what are the things that you take into consideration?

Freshness.

The expiration date is indicated on the package, so I always check it out.

So, how do you define "fresh"?

As for food such as vegetables, meat or fish, I can tell if they are fresh or not, at the first glance.

What else? Freshness and date. What about things that are packaged?

I also check the date when I purchase eggs.

So you are saying that the date is the most important thing.

Right. It needs to be checked whenever I purchase juice or milk, I try to get the newest one.

I also check eggs if they are broken or not.

[conversation is drifting about how to examine eggs]

So you are checking to see if the product is broken.

[Everyone talks at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

The freshness and the date. What else do we need to check out?

As for fish, I purchase them frozen one if I can't find fresh ones.

So do I.

Frozen fish can be fresher than “fresh” fish because fish was frozen right after it was caught, and stays fresh frozen.

So you are saying that frozen fish are more fresh than the other?

It could be the case.

I mean frozen food can be considered fresh?

The date is indicated on frozen food products, too, though.

It is frozen right after it came out from the water, right? So I think it is fresh.

I heard the same thing about vegetables. Sometimes frozen vegetables are more fresh than “fresh” ones, because they are frozen right after they are harvested in the best season.

I heard canned foods are not good (fresh), but frozen vegetables are the freshest.

Such as pumpkins.

What about price? Do you care about price?

I do.

Oh, is that so?

And I also care about the brand. I have some preferred brand for each food.

Do any of you care about price?

Yes, I do.

When I was in Japan, I did care about price, however, here in the U.S., things are relatively inexpensive, and I do care more about the better taste.

[Everyone talks at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Please compare now to the time when you were in Japan. You preferred to buy the best tasting products, right?

(everyone, respectively) No doubt about it.

Even if it costs twice as much as the cheap one, I take the better tasting one.

So, you purchase the best tasting ones or something less expensive?

(everyone, respectively) I'll buy the best tasting ones even if they are expensive.

Everyone is nodding.

My favorite brand is quite stable, though I assume that it depends.

And a family with children may choose more inexpensive ones, but a couple like us, living me and my husband, may choose better tasting ones. So, I think it depends on the family status.

Yes, that is why you (living without children) are here.

(laughter)

[Everyone talks at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

You mentioned that your children liked the frozen whole meals, when you were living with children.

Right. There are a variety of frozen food products. My children seemed to be happy choosing such things since they were allowed to eat that sort of food only when my husband and I went out. Actually, some of them are quite good.

Children like TV dinners. When we (parents) were going out for dinner just ourselves, and had a baby-sitter, I put some in freezer for children.

Can I go back to brand? Are brand names important to you?

(everyone, at the same time) They are to some degree.

Did you find any brand that you dislike when you were in Japan?

Are you talking about food? I couldn't find any.

Sorry. It was a strange question, wasn't it?

(laughter)

It's true that there are brands I like, though.

Do you shop all by yourselves, or do your husbands help you?

(laughter)

How many of you go shopping with your husbands? Just one?

(laughter)

That means the rest of you go shopping all by yourself, correct?

He follows me, though.

What about cooking? Does your husband cook?

(laughter; this means husbands almost never cook.)

Well, yes, on Sundays, only if he is in a good mood.

Maybe once or twice a month.

Only when we barbecue.

What else do you consider, when you purchase food?

It depends on the store. The favorite shop.

Which place do you like?

Well, I like places where shop clerks are disciplined and cheerful, and which offer fresh food.

The store that has fresh foods, with many customers.

So, you look for good shops offering fresh food.

It implies that the shop has many customers since things rotate quickly.

Any other comments? I have heard that products which are on the market are too salty. Is that right?

(everyone, at the same time) Right. They are too salty.

Do you care for any other dietary concerns? Do you choose low fat products?

I am inclined to buy low fat products.

How many of you pay attention to such information, when you buy something?

Maybe.

Sometimes.

I don't personally buy low fat products.

What else do you consider? What about packaging?

About packaging? I don't want something dirty or sticky.

Or bent.

I take the one from the middle of the piled products, if it's newer, to get a neat one.

(laughter)

Any other comments? Do you care for the packaging materials?

I noticed that carrots I bought were not quite good color (orange) when I took them out of the bag. I think the bag was colored orange on purpose and I don't like that. So I like the packages that allow me to see the content well.

When you were in Japan, did you separate trash?

(everyone) Trash? Yes, of course.

Do you think you purchased things based on whether or not the package was easy to recycle?

We did not pay attention to that detail.

It was not the reason for purchasing. It was an after effect.

But, Kinokuniya (supermarket?) was using a paper-based (fiber-molded) tray, but not styrene foam, and I liked it and chose it. I thought it was a good idea. Everything is inflammable and it does not produce poisonous gas when burned.

I set up three trash boxes for inflammables, nonflammables and plastics, and I separated those. So I did not have to think about the disposability of trash.

The trash such as styrene foam was collected at supermarkets.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Did you do that? How many of you have done this before?

I did not do that before, but I learned about it when I went back to Japan temporarily.

Did you know that a new law was established on April 1st. It is called the "packaging recycling law" and it says that packages (cans and empty bottles) need to be collected.

Something like you have to peel the sticker off?

I don't know all the details because I've been here in the United States.

We have to recycle cans and bottles here in Michigan.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

You can get the deposit back.

You don't get cash back (when you recycles bottles) in Japan, do you?

No, I don't think so.

But still, people do recycle in Japan.

That's right.

Do you think that people in the States would recycle even if people did not get a deposit back?

(many of them) I don't think they would.

Some of you said that you go shopping many times a week. Could you explain the reason why?

It's because I forget to buy something.

You purchase most of the things at one time, right?

Right. But for example, milk spoils easily.

Isn't it said that it (milk) should last for a week, though?

Once you opened it, it does not last that long. Probably for three days. That's why I have to make a trip in order to get fresh milk.

So you are saying that you have to go shopping several times a week to get fresh products. You buy small quantities, and replenish with fresh products more often.

It applies to vegetables and fruits, too.

Fresh comes first.

Yes.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

I conducted the focus group with students before, but I did not get this sort of detailed response at all.

(laughter)

They seldom go shopping, so they were not quite responsive.

I see.

Now I would like to move on to "frozen food products". What do the words "frozen food products" make you think of? What comes to mind first?

Green soybeans, taros. I use frozen vegetables in case I need more after I start cooking, though I admit that it dulls the taste.

Mix vegetables.

What else? Do you mainly use frozen vegetables or ingredients?

In Japan, my mother used to buy entrees for box lunches such as croquette.

Do they need any cooking?

Some were microwavable and some needed to be fried or baked.

You can fry them, or microwave them, or cook them with a conventional oven.

Do you buy them?

My mother did for lunch. I asked my mother buy frozen pizza when I was a kid.

What else?

I buy and put some in my freezer frozen pilaf (cooked rice) in case I have to leave my children at home.

Broiled rice balls are good!

I didn't think the taste was good, once.

My parents were the generation who did not like frozen foods (this opinion was by 30+ years-old participants), so I did not eat them. However, since I grew up, I use them.

What kind of images do you have of frozen foods?

It did not taste good at first.

I heard it has some artificial additives which are not healthy.

I feel as though we are being lazy (since I use frozen foods). The old people may think that we are using such a (corner-cutting) thing...

They may think we are lazy.

Is there an image of “corner-cutting”? Do you feel guilty when you use them?

Somehow?

In some way.

But now, frozen food tastes better, and I do not.

Formerly, they did not taste good, and somehow, I felt I was being lazy, not doing a housewife's job... But now, the taste is good, and I do not feel guilty.

If I buy ready-made, I might feel guilty, but I probably won't when I use such frozen products just as side dishes or ingredients.

Recently, I do not feel any guilty at all.

(many of them agree with it by nodding)

The taste has been getting better.

Here I use ready-made products, which are microwavable, for my husband's lunch. They actually taste good.

More specifically.

Squid and creamy croquette.

Can you get them here in the U.S at a Japanese food store?

Right. You can also get fish cakes with tartar sauce.

Do you have to fry them?

No, they are microwavable. I put them in the lunch box as it is (frozen), then my husband microwave the box lunch at his office's breakroom. It is quite convenient.

Why did you feel guilty before?

It might be because they can be made too easily.

It was because using frozen product was cheating, or corner-cutting.

Are you afraid that someone might see you purchasing frozen products?

(laughter) No, not like that. I might feel guilty for being lazy to my family. For not doing the job (as a housewife) that I have to do, perfectly.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

But when I was a child (this opinion was by a 30+ years-old participant), if there was a housewife who bought frozen foods a lot at the supermarket and was seen by someone, she could get a bad reputation among the neighbors.

(laughter)

So, there still is such a bad image among some traditional (elder) housewives.

So you are saying it is changing, and you don't have such a bad impression of frozen products anymore, rather you use them in a positive way.

Well I might say, American frozen products do not taste very good to me, so I don't buy them, but I buy some Japanese frozen products.

Instead of feeling guilty for using convenient stuff, I try to use such products effectively, and use the spare time wisely.

(some of them) I agree.

You mostly talked about ingredients, but not the whole meal. Does this imply that you still have some kind of guilt?

I just want to have better tasting food. If I use ingredients and season the taste by myself, I can get better tasting meals.

But recently, there is one good frozen item (takoyaki: Japanese snack food), which is quite popular among us, and it may taste better than you can make at home.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Why do you use frozen products? Is it because they are easy to cook?

Yes, and you can also store them for a long time.

My husband and I eat like birds, so it's easier to use frozen products in a way.

Easy to store. So you are saying that you can keep them longer?

When you need it, it's there.

You said that you often go shopping, though.

But we start thinking about dinner in the evening, so we cannot go shopping.

Can I ask what you have in your freezer?

Small potatoes (Japanese kind) and slices of bread.

Salted grilled salmon and white fish.

Meat, fermented soybeans and fish sausage.

And ramen-noodles, Japanese-style noodles, too.

Do you freeze fermented soybeans and fish sausage in Japan?

No.

So you are doing this since you are here in the States. What did you have when you were in Japan, then?

Ice cream and ice cubes.

Is that so? It's quite different.

I think I might have put shrimp in the freezer.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

You did not have many things in the freezer when you were in Japan, right?

White rice. I froze leftover white rice.

Pilaf (cooked rice). Frozen pilaf is very convenient, and I cooked it for my own lunch.

(many of them agreed.)

Could you tell me what kind of ready made products you buy, except ingredients? You named pilaf, and...

(everyone respectively) Grilled rice balls, pizza, Chinese dumplings, spring rolls and croquettes.

We are not talking about potato croquette, but creamy or crab croquette, right?

So you are saying that you stored different things when you were in Japan.

Right.

What will happen when you go back to Japan? Are you likely to put just ice cream, ice cubes and an iced pillow in the freezer.

Go back to less food in the freezer?

I may put in some more, I guess.

(some agree)

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

In Japan, you can go shopping easily at the store near you, so you do not have to store a lot.

Here we can purchase a lot of things at one time and load them into a car, but in Japan we have to walk home.

How did you shop when were in Japan? Some used their cars and some walked to the supermarket. What about the size of refrigerator compared to the one in the States?

I think the one in Japan was a little bit smaller.

I took the one that I bought in the States to Japan, but it was quite empty in Japan. I bought a smaller one. Now, my freezer is filled with frozen foods.

It shows that your shopping style changed when you went back to Japan.

Here we often have guests from my husband's work, so I need to keep something just in case.

When you buy frozen products, do you buy a lot of them at one time, or a few?

It depends.

How long do you keep them after you purchase them?

Some are sitting there for quite a long time.

Some could sit there for a couple of months.

Is there any possibility that you throw them away?

Yes, if they get freezer burn.

Some of them might sit in the freezer for six months.

If I were in Japan, I would not be that patient. Here I think these frozen products are needed, so I keep them for six months.

I can tell whether it's getting old or not.

Right.

How many of you use frozen products fairly quickly? How soon? Once week?

In my case, I use them up within two weeks.

I would say, within a week.

The rest of you keep them for a month? How long do you think you can keep them? Six months?

Yes, I sometimes keep them for a month.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

If the package is vacuum, it stays in good condition quite a long time. But it depends on the food.

So what is the average? Within three days? A week? Two weeks?

One month. (some agree.)

Two month, for my case.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Do you think the demand for frozen products is increasing in Japan?

(everyone) Yes, I think so.

Everyone thinks that it is.

It's because the number of working women is increasing and so is the number of older people.

How are older people related to the demand for frozen products?

It's quite difficult to prepare meals only for two, so frozen products are quite useful for those older people. Or I cook a lot at one time, then keep half of it in the freezer.

It does not mean that you use frozen products. What about the demand for frozen products?

(many of them) It will be increasing. The techniques of manufacturing these products seem to be progressing.

Do you think frozen products taste better than before?

(everyone) Much better. They used to smell strange. Microwaves have changed the whole situation.

Let me hear about microwave ovens. Who is not using a microwave? Who was not using one in Japan? One, two. Is it useful?

Yes.

What for you use it?

Defrost.

Re-heating.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Who does not have a microwave oven? None. Is there anyone who has two of them? Here you are. Some Americans have two refrigerators, one in the kitchen, another in the basement.

I also have two refrigerators. (there are five participants who have two refrigerators.)

Wait a second. Why do you have to go shopping so often, if you have two refrigerators?

In order to get fresh products.

Are both full?

Yes, almost.

No, not really. I use one of them only for Japanese food. I put tea in it, too. Also, I store fish broth and dried food in it.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. Conversation is drifting to other topics. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

You have two refrigerators which are fully stocked and you often go shopping in order to get fresh products. Are they circulated well?

(laughter)

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

In my case, one refrigerator is only for drinks, mainly for the guests.

Let's move on to "TV dinners". Who has not tried a TV dinner yet? Two. Those of you who have tried TV dinners, could you tell me why?

Children. They like it.

Five of you said that the main reason for purchasing TV dinners is for your children.

My husband takes them with him in his lunch, then he microwaves them at work. But he said that the taste is either too strong or too salty, and since then he quit eating them.

There are so many "not suitable", miss ones for us, and it is quite difficult to find a good one.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

My children liked something small called "single".

Do children like these?

My children liked the red boxed "Stouffer's"

Let's say we bring these back to Japan. Which one would be more popular, Japanese food, or western food such as lasagna?

I think western food would be more popular. They can cook Japanese food by themselves. It's quite difficult to make lasagna or pizza from scratch. That's why.

So you are saying that western food is better than Japanese for frozen whole meals in Japan?

I think Japanese food is better.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

High quality products have come out lately in Japan, though. I might use some of them such as udon (Japanese style noodles) since it seems to be very convenient.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

A TV dinner might be good for a person who is living alone, if they can have everything on one plate, meat, side dish such as vegetables, and a desert.

Are you talking about western food?

It does not matter whether it's a western or a Japanese dish.

Let's say we put TV dinners on the market in Japan. Which is better, western or Japanese food?

For younger people, western must be better, I think.

It depends what kind of western food is chosen. Here some taste good, but some are quite bad.

Let's say that Japanese well-known food companies are going to manufacture new frozen products. What should be chosen?

Kimpira (Japanese dish) , baked rice ball nishime (Japanese traditional dish).

If we put different types of TV dinners into the Japanese Market, which would be more popular, western or Japanese food?

(everyone) I think Japanese dishes would be more popular, if they taste good.

Children might prefer fried chicken.

(everyone) Yes, children probably like such a thing.

If you were consumers, what would you like to eat? Are frozen products O.K.?

As long as they taste good, I would buy them.

In Japan, there is another way to get a quick whole meal.

You can easily get daily meals at the delicatessen.

Frozen products are more convenient in that we don't have to make another trip to the shop in the snow. We can stock them.

People living in cold places might need these kinds of products and those who are in warmer places won't.

In the rural areas, most of the supermarkets are closed pretty early, so the time we can shop is limited. After the stores are closed, you can not get anything. But if you have those frozen whole meals, you can get a quick meal.

In another focus group, students pointed out that single office workers seem to purchase TV dinners the most.

I think it depends of when they get out from work. They might prefer a good warm dinner, if the shops are still open.

I think if I were working, I would not want to go shopping after a hard day of work. So I just would want to go home directly, and might prefer to eat such a frozen whole meal.

[Conversation is drifting to another topic.]

It is convenient if you buy some and store some in the freezer. The advantage of it is that you can store them longer, and cook them quickly.

(everyone agreed)

Do you serve them for yourself and your husband? How often do you eat TV dinners?

It depends. If we come home late, we might.

When I come home late, I eat TV dinners, so I would say once or twice a week. Just for myself.

I do not use them for the two of us.

I see. Just for yourself, but not for your husband.

I use frozen products as ingredients.

If I served TV dinners, my husband might think that I am not working hard enough as a home maker, on a usual day (opinion by 50+ housewife).

Husbands seem to get frustrated with the wife's attitude (opinion by 50+ housewife), not by the taste, but by the wife's attitude.

I think there is a generation gap between the 30s and the 50s. My father would not have been satisfied if there were not enough different types of food on his plate (opinion by 30+ housewife).

If someone always requires a woman to devote herself to home making, he would not get a wife, I think. I think I will get a job when I go back to Japan, and I may serve those frozen meals. Actually the young husband's way of thinking seems to have been changing. Instead of seeing his wife's grumpy face, doing cooking after her day of work, he might prefer to see his wife's smile and receive her apology for not cooking, and eat a TV dinner (opinion by 30+ housewife).

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

I do not think there are so many of them (opinion by 20+ housewife).

The style of marriage is also changing, especially among younger generations. The typical traditional one and more Americanized one.

You mentioned that she cooks a lot at one time then keeps some of it in the freezer.

Right. I buy a big pack of vegetables, and I cook the whole thing and keep some of it in the freezer.

Do you think that the demand for TV dinners by older people will increase?

If it tastes good.

It's true that frozen products are cheaper than fresh vegetables and their prices are stable compared to those of fresh vegetables.

Do you think that there will be a demand for TV dinners by singles?

(everyone) Yes.

So, young couples, singles, children and also older people.

I assume that the demand for TV dinners will be increasing every year.

So you are saying that there is a possibility of increase in this market.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

You can find a lot of packages with calorie information, but in Japan, there are not so many. I want information about calories on the package.

Do you consider calories?

(many of them) Yes.

Here people are more sensitive to calories than in Japan. Being overweight is not such a major problem in Japanese society, right?

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

My parents' generation does not get used to frozen foods and microwave ovens, so...

As my generation is aging, the demand for frozen products will be increasing since we do not have much hesitation to use these products.

[tape 1 side A ends]

They have to be tasty, though.

The taste should be weak. So you can add the taste by yourself as you like it.

We can combine those frozen products and home made in a positive way. This is my opinion, though.

Actually, cooking magazines come to focus the use of frozen products such as meat balls, and introduces a variety of types of cooking with such frozen products.

When you cook some main dish, such as fish, and feel you need something more, you can get one or more items from your freezer stock. That's the way I think of frozen foods.

There is a magazine about cooking, and there was one special issue that was about the use of frozen food ingredients. So frozen foods are actually getting popular in Japan, I think.

You mean as ingredients?

Not only ingredients, but ready-made frozen food items!

There are frozen meat balls that are not seasoned. You can arrange them for many kinds of dishes.

Let's go back to TV dinners. Where should TV dinners be put in?

Supermarkets or at convenience stores.

Which one do you go to for daily shopping?

(everyone) Supermarket.

Is that for your family? Is the convenience store considered a daily shopping place for the family?

It could be. Supermarkets close early, and when I need something later, I go to the convenience store (since they are always open).

Do you go to the convenience store to get frozen products?

If the supermarket is closed.

Yes. I found that convenience stores sometimes have some good different selections that supermarkets do not have, such as convenient stuff.

Like what?

Easy-cookable ramen noodles. You can heat them up quickly. They have a lot of vegetables in it.

I thought convenience stores are basically for singles.

Oh, no. I often go there.

Food companies send different products to different shops depending on the target. So in your case, the product has sold well in the convenience store.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Convenience stores are good to put the product in.

But the total number may be bigger at supermarkets than convenience stores.

You buy frozen foods when you do grocery shopping. So the supermarket could be better, I think.

It depends on the type of the meal, doesn't it?

When do you want to use those frozen whole meals? Did you mention when you are busy, what else?

When I'm alone, for lunch.

How about I'm alone for dinner?

(laughter)

So you are saying that you mostly use TV dinners for yourself.

Or when I'm busy, for my husband.

When you have to leave your husband at home, TV dinners might be used, too. So, women use them more than men do. I see. Let's say someone sees you eating a TV dinner. Would you be embarrassed?

I might recommend for him or her to try it.

I don't care!

I may say "sorry!" about it.

How about the price? How much would be the appropriate price for TV dinners, to be competitive with other quick meals?

The cheaper the better. No one would buy it if it is expensive and tastes bad.

\$5? A box lunch costs you around that much.

Which would you buy, a boxed lunch or a TV dinner, if they were the same price?

Box lunch.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Well, it depends on the selection. Frozen whole meals can be convenient in regard to storage, so...

So around \$5 is OK? TV dinners cost about one to two dollars here. Some are almost four dollars.

(everyone respectively) I think more than \$5 is OK, if it is something good.

You can get three TV dinners for two dollars at Meijer.

The cheapest one, isn't it? 89 cents for one.

Not always. Meijer sometimes holds frozen food products sale and you can get expensive ones for lower prices.

Japanese do not like overly cheap ones, do we? It should be some reasonable price, not too expensive.

How about if you serve it to your husband? How much would be good?

Around \$5?

If it is for my children, it should be around \$5, but if it is for us, I can pay more for it.

For husband, around \$10.

(everyone respectively) \$7 - \$8, to \$10.

Once there was \$15 ramen noodles, by a special restaurant. They tasted good, and were expensive.

Even if it costs a lot, Japanese buy it.

So you are saying you want something special that you can not easily make at home, something like from a famous restaurant?

Yes...

It would be good if there were some patterns, for children, or for special thing...

The American TV dinner is pretty big, so if the size is the same, it does not fit into the Japanese refrigerator and cannot be stored. So it should be a little bit smaller, and stackable.

What would be the appropriate quantity? Basically a TV dinner should fit into the freezer.

(everyone) Of course! Right.

American TV dinner such as chicken or potato are relatively big, aren't they?

That size does not work for the Japanese refrigerator.

Even for the American refrigerator, that is quite big. Unless people have another freezer.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

The price can be inexpensive and expensive, I think

How should the price be determined?

If the TV dinner includes something special that is difficult to cook such as lobster or shark fin, I don't mind paying more. If it includes only ordinary things, I would not buy it.

How much should it be? Around \$5?

\$5 is a reasonable price, I think.

(argued about price, and reached a conclusion...)

If it costs around \$5, I will buy it (do not hesitate to buy).

But if it is a young couple, with children, I would not buy an expensive one.

So, how much would be reasonable for a children's TV dinner?

I would say \$3 to \$3.50? But we cannot expect good products with this price.

It cannot be tasty. If in the U.S., it can be better taste, but in Japan, it already sounds bad.

Do you think you are going to purchase TV dinners in the future?

(everyone, respectively) Sure. If I want to.

Taste comes first, right?

Right. As long as it tastes good, I will buy it.

Are there any people who would not buy them?

I think I won't (opinion by 60+ housewife).

It seems that almost everyone is going to purchase TV dinners.

Yes, if someone recommends a particular one to me, I'll try it.

I don't think I'll try everything to find a good one. Just try something that someone I know was recommended.

Again, taste comes first.

What triggered my use of frozen products was Samuki udon (Japanese style noodles).

I buy frozen bagels, then microwave them before I toast them. I personally think that frozen bagels are better.

[Conversation drifted to another topic (about bagels). Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Which do you use more often, the microwave or the oven? Almost all of you use conventional ovens?

(There was just one person who used only microwave oven)

You can't use foil in the microwave.

(It seemed that many participants used frozen whole meals some time ago and have not used them recently. Some of them also do not know the package can be used in a microwave oven)

The material should be some kind of plastic or something, right?

How many of you use both the microwave and the conventional ovens? Can you tell the difference?

(some of them) I personally prefer the conventional oven. If you use a microwave oven, the food will not be heated up equally.

The reason people use microwaves is that they are speedy, right?

Right.

But it will take more than 20 minutes if you use conventional ovens, won't it?

20 minutes is quite fast for preparation of a dinner.

It saves work and time.

So basically, you use the conventional oven more than the microwave.

That tastes better.

Please check it out, if you have not used a conventional oven.

The TV dinner is named in such a way since it can be ready while watching TV.

I see. Do you think the TV dinner was more popular before?

Yes. Three decades ago. Nowadays, it is not so popular, I think, in the U.S.

Could you tell us why?

Instead of the TV dinner, people are inclined to go to fast food restaurants.

Those restaurants have become sophisticated and have more customers.

The American people might have realized the value of food life.

They used to heat the TV dinner up at home, then bring it to the children's school to provide a hot meal for their kids.

Didn't they have hot lunch at school?

Even if they did, still mothers did so. Women were staying at home at that time.

I thought it was the other way around. Since women now have their own jobs, the demand for TV dinners has increased. So the TV dinner was more popular thirty years ago, when it came out. Nowadays people are inclined to eat out.

I think so...

[Conversation is drifting.]

Shall we move on to the TV dinner package? What kind of package do you prefer? You may not pay attention to it, though.

Cleanliness comes first.

I prefer that the contents should be visible.

So you prefer to see the contents. But in most of the cases, the package is a box.

At least the picture of the dish should be on the box.

What kind of pictures are preferable? For instance, the picture of the dish served on the tray or another plate? The picture of the cooked dish or of the frozen one?

Actual food.

(everyone) The cooked one.

Is there anything that needs to be considered?

Size. If it is unnecessarily big, it does not fit into the freezer.

I got an impression that the thin and bigger box looks better than the thick and smaller one if the quantity is the same.

We can heat it up equally with a microwave.

I see.

I like boxed ones better than in a plastic bag.

Why?

Because it looks neat, and can be stored neatly.

What about the information such as "low fat".

I prefer to have that kind of identification.

Salt or calories.

Fast, inexpensive, and good taste!

What about the color of the box?

Something that sets off the dish.

Lighter color is better than darker.

Orange is good. Healthy choice is green, isn't it?

I don't care about the color of the box very much (one person).

Do you have any comments with respect to cooking?

Some are not quite easy to open.

(many agreed)

Easy to be opened is needed.

Someone mentioned that TV dinners do not always heat up equally. The package which prevents such defects is needed.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Do you care about the material of package?

(everyone respectively) We have to think about its disposal.

Considering this disposal matter, what kind of material should be chosen?

(everyone) Paper. Something flammable.

With respect to disposability, but not recycling. Is that correct?

Right. Paper can be turned into the soil.

I wonder if plastic might be harmful to our health, if we heat it up.

What about you, you have not said a word for a while?

I also think paper is good because I heard it is good for the environment.

I think plastic is O.K. as long as it is recyclable, and also it should be identified.

Do you think the disposability or recyclability of the material affects the standard of consumers?

No, I don't think so. Aluminum foil might be harmful if it gets melted. Paper is not preferable if it gets wet. I have an impression that plastic is the safest thing. But this is only my thought and not based on any scientific evidence. If the price is the same, the product which is microwavable is preferable.

Who prefers plastics?

I'm worried about paper being easy to get wet and damaged.

Coating might be the problem.

I wonder if plastic is all right. For example, the greasy part seems to be melted.

Someone pointed out the problem regarding trash. Do you care about overpackaging?

(many of them) Yes, I do.

What is considered overpackaging, then? Someone mentioned that the box is definitely needed.

Yeah... it may be overpackaging...

I don't think having a box is overpackaging.

It is needed at least.

Right. It's also true that it requires space, though.

As long as the products looks fine with the plastic tray, I don't mind if it's not boxed.

That reminds me that dumplings are usually packed with film, right?

Here, dumplings are dumped in the plastic bag, right? (laughter) In contrast, in Japan, dumplings are put on a divided plate and packed in a bag. Do you consider it as overpackaging compared to boxed products?

We are comparing something that is packed with plastic and also boxed, aren't we?

Right. So either box or bag.

As long as it looks fine with a plastic bag, I don't think a box is needed.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. Conversation is not distinguishable.]

How about putting a picture (label) on the tray? So you do not need any box, do you?

I don't think a box is needed for frozen food products that are not main dishes. On the other hand, TV dinners might need to be boxed to receive a good reputation.

Japanese tend to buy good looking stuff.

How do you explain the fact that you don't like overpackaging?

When people say that they don't like overpackaging, it is not true, I think. (laughter) They like good looking stuff after all.

What would be your choice? Who prefers no overpackaging? Who cares more about the environment, but not the appearance of the product?

I don't think a box is overpackaging, rather, it protects the content.

Japanese would not buy unless the content is clean.

So the consensus is that double packaging is not considered overpackaging.

It's better to have a box for the purpose of storage.

Someone mentioned that the contents should be visible.

What I mean is that the contents should be indicated on the surface of the package.

So you are saying that as long as the contents are indicated and clean, it does not matter whether a bag or a box is used for packaging material. What else should be taken into consideration regarding packaging? Disposability, recyclability or convenience?

I do recycle since I'm supposed to do so, but recyclability is not one of my standards for grocery shopping. Frankly speaking, ease of use comes first.

You mean ease of disposal?

Right.

Everyone agreed that a paper tray is better than a plastic one. One of the reasons why is that paper plates are easily disposed of.

Again, it cannot be the standard for shopping, though.

So, packaging does not affect purchasing that much. What kind of problems did you find regarding packaging? For instance, there might be possibility that you see the discoloration after heating.

It (a change of color) happens when I heat aluminum.

Now I would like you to look at these packages. These are the ones that caught my eyes. Let's take a look at each of them. Have you seen this type of package? Could you pass this around? What about this one (paperboard tray with paperboard lid)? The contents are directly put in the box. This has only a primary package.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. Conversation is not distinguishable. Someone is explaining about the package to other participants including microwavability.]

This is good. This is not overpackaging.

(many agreed)

Who doesn't like this type? No one? It might be the most plain one. The price is about one to two dollars. This can be used in microwave and conventional ovens. What needs to be improved about this packaging? This one is black, isn't it.

The color black is not good.

This white one looks cleaner.

This black one stands out among these white ones.

Isn't it because it's an Oriental dish?

Why does black mean Oriental dish?

It seems that American people have a stereo type of coloring about Asian countries. For instance, red, gold or yellow.

This might reflect that black and red of China.

Let's move on to the next one. This one is easily opened. On the other hand, this type (the former one) is difficult to open.

It looks easy to use. I like it.

I'm not comfortable eating out of this plate (opinion by 60+ participant).

I put it on a different plate after I heat it up.

Who heats this up after you put it on a different plate?

(some) I do so, because I worry about the coating.

I see. When you heat pilaf up, you put it on a different plate, first. Who heats TV dinner up with this original plate?

(many of them) If I'm alone, yes.

I see. Is there anyone who definitely uses a different plate?

(a few)

I want to finish my lunch as quick as possible. That's why I use the original plate.

[Everyone talking at the same time. Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I do not like the second one because it is like a box. The first one is OK, because the lid can be removed, and it looks like you are eating out of a tray, or should I say, a plate.

The second one might be easier to open.

[Everyone talking at the same time. Conversation is not distinguishable.]

That one is not a box (the first one), but the second one (easy-open paperboard box) is a box. I do not want to eat from the box.

It is easier to open, though...

(conclusion, by many of them) I don't like the way that the lid is still on the box... It has to be removed to look like a tray.

How about this package (the third one). This one has an outer box, and this paper tray has a film lid.

That is the one which is difficult to open! If you open it a little, it sometimes rips off, or can not be removed completely.

The directions are: remove the film from potato, and cook it for twenty to twenty-five minutes at 350F with a conventional oven.

It's frozen, so that it won't get burned.

But it is not stiff, so it's scary to use this.

I want to put this on a plate.

It looks better on the plate, but not in the tray.

You said that package was better before. The picture is a different tray. How about this one (paper folding tray, no compartment, with sleeve as the secondary package)? It has these kind of things.

Wow.

It looks a little better than the first two.

It might be convenient. All you have to do is to pull it out (from sleeve).

These two (folding tray) are the same type of tray. The only difference between these two is one is compartmentalized, and the other isn't. Which one do you think is better, if two or three different items are served? Could you pass this around?

(everyone respectively) The compartmentalized one is better, I think.

After you eat them all it doesn't matter, but before you eat, I want each food separated.

The next one is quite different from the others (fiber molded tray).

It looks firm.

It looks like a plastic tray, doesn't it?

This one (fiber molded tray, with small fancy print on the tray) is almost the same as the last one.

(many of them, respectively with some enthusiasm) Oh, this one is cute. This is good. It has a pattern on it.

(The housewife who keeps saying she does not want to eat from the tray) This tray is good, and I have no problem with eating out of this tray.

It is already divided, so it might be better to eat out of this.

If it's one dish, I don't want to eat it on the original plate.

Did you like the pattern?

Yes, I think it's cute.

[Conversation is not distinguishable]

If I don't use my own plate, this tray is good.

(many of them agreed)

How about that paper folding tray and this fiber molded tray?

(everyone) I like the fiber molded one. I have no problem eating out of this tray.

How about this shallow one and this deep one (both fiber molded tray)?

I think the deeper is better.

But someone mentioned that the shallow one is better to heat a dish equally.

But this tray (fiber molded, deeper) looks firm, though.

This is not so deep, shallow enough for microwaving.

I see. All of these are made of paper. How about this plastic plate?

This one is not good...

The color, black is not good.

The color may not be good. Do you think white or lighter colors are better? Dumpling and a sort of fried rice are put in this package.

I think a divided plate is better.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

(everyone respectively) I think the compartmentalized one is better.

What about this one (fiber molded tray)? This is for kids.

The picture of the package is on the actual tray.

It looks OK, though the picture is actually a package.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

How about this package (compartmentalized CPET tray)? Is this picture on actual tray? It may be. This includes three kind of items.

Recently, this one is sold in Japan. I saw an ad in a Japanese magazine.

I think that one is not made in Japan, but imported from the U.S., I guess.

How much is the price in Japan?

I do not think it is so expensive...

How much is this one (in the U.S.)?

It is around \$3.

I will buy it, if it is around \$3 in Japan.

If it is inexpensive, you will buy more?

(many said) Yes.

But not too cheap.

I wonder what kind of ingredients are used, if they cost too little.

Please choose your favorite package out of these products.

[Everyone talks at the same time. Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I like the white one.

I don't like the black one.

Do you still like this (paperboard tray with paperboard lid, the first one)? You said OK for this at that time.

After we looked at all of the packages, it is not so good.

What kind of color (for the secondary package) is good?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

White, orange or red. O.K.

That purple package is cute. Is it for a kid? It is good.

I like that one (with warm color of red and orange). It looks delicious.

What about this one. This is also a greenish color. Do you like green?

Yes, I do.

The package is gradually changed from green to lighter green. That is good.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

So, you don't want a black tray. Let's move on to the material. Which one do you like better, a paper made plate or a plastic divided plate? Ten for paper. Why do you like paper better?

From the ecological point of view, paper is better.

How many of you think that plastic is O.K.? Three.

Paper one is expensive, isn't it?

I'm not sure, but it depends on the company.

I don't like brown paper.

So, you prefer a white tray. If possible, with a pattern. What about the lid? Someone said that she did not like the lid.

It's O.K., if it's easily peeled.

As a matter of fact, this one is hard to peel off.

Well, a thick one might be better.

An opening is helpful, isn't it?

Do you care about the lid?

Yes. For example, peel off the lid just from the potato, and it is quite difficult.

What can make these packages more useful?

Ease of opening.

Change the material (of the lid), and make it easy-open.

What about the tray? Should it be compartmentalized, or not?

The divided one is better.

Then what about the plate for pasta with meat balls? Should it be divided, too?

Maybe the divided one.

Either one is fine with me.

You do care for recycling, but it does not affect purchasing. Some products indicates that the recyclability of the material used for the tray.

(one participant) I don't think it is needed.

(many of them) The identification is useful in terms of disposability.

Do Japanese products have such identifications?

Yes, something like triangles, or a circle one.

But the identification is not on the surface of the package, is it?

It does not matter. The point is that it is on the plate and we can see it when we dispose of it.

The content comes first after all.

I think that is all. Do you have any comments? Oh, one more thing. What kind of phrases or names should be used?

Something that sounds tasty.

Give me an example.

"lean".

What Japanese word would appeal to consumers? Healthy or gourmet? What about this one?

[not distinguishable]

"Grommet"?

"Mom's home-made"

"Restaurant"

I see. It appeals that a products offers something that you cannot taste at home. Do we need such names of a famous chef?

[not distinguishable]

Do you think it works?

Yes. It can be expensive with the names.

This is the last question. Are you going to buy this frozen whole meals for Japanese, when you go back to Japan? If so, how often are you going to buy them?

It depends on the content, I think (by 50+ housewife).

What comes first?

The taste.

Once in a while.

Do you keep them in the freezer?

Well, I can get a good warm meal at the delicatessen, so I probably won't need a frozen dish. So, maybe for emergency food.

You might keep some in the freezer.

Maybe.

I will buy them if I know that they are good (by 30+ housewife).

How often are you going to purchase?

I would not buy them regularly. I may use them for lunch, not for dinner. I might keep two of them in the freezer.

I care for the taste and the price. If I need them, I may go and buy them, but I don't think I will stock them (by 30+ housewife).

I care for the taste, price and ingredients of the meal, but taste comes first. I might keep one or two of them (by 20+ housewife).

On what occasion are you going to eat them?

For lunch. I might eat them with my children in the future.

In case of emergency, I will keep two or four (by 60+ housewife), for me and my husband, for once or twice.

So you would not use them daily.

No, I don't think so.

The same for me (by 40+ housewife), but I would buy some in case of emergency.

The same for me, too (by 60+ housewife), I might keep one or two.

I will give them a chance (by 40+ housewife). If it turns out O.K., I might keep one or two.

Exactly the same.

As long as a product is tasty, I will buy and stock some of them (by 60+ housewife).

How often do or will you eat them?

Maybe twice a week.

I keep some food for three or four days during winter. So when I go back to Japan, I will do so. I will keep quite a lot, I think. Not only two.

I keep two or three frozen food products as ingredients. As for this frozen whole meals, I would probably buy two of them every other week, for myself.

If you were in charge of advertisement for new frozen food products, what would you do?

I might use TV ad.

What kind of commercials would you make?

Something that appeals the taste of the product...

Tasty, easy and quick.

A Japanese dish might appeal to consumers.

A demonstration at the supermarket might be effective. That way consumers can see what the product is like.

I bought a Chinese dish that was a frozen food product.

I'm glad that I had the experience of gaining home maker's perspectives, which are quite different from those of students.

Well, we have experience. That's why.

The experience of home making makes a big difference, I think.

APPENDIX F

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Focus Group Number 4 - Transcription: Housewives with Children (Translated from Japanese conversation)

Thank you everyone for coming. I would like to conduct a focus group today. My name is Tanizaki. I'm a packaging major in the master's program at Michigan State University. Is there anyone who knows about focus groups? Then let me explain what a focus group is. It basically aims to obtain consumers reactions to a new product before a company actually puts it on the market, and also to have consumers discuss what will be the most effective way to sell the product. It is considered a marketing procedures. Another example is, in an election, candidates use this procedure in order to improve their image by gathering voter's opinions. The focus of this discussion is "frozen food products". Among various types of frozen food products, I have chosen "TV dinners" as our topic. Are you familiar with them? How many of you have not seen a TV dinner before?

I have seen it, though I did not know the name.

It is a frozen food product such as fried chicken with vegetables that is served on a plate. Have you used this before? Most of you. Who has not used it? Four. This is a question for those of you who have used TV dinners before. How often do you use them?

We use it quite often since my children like it. The size is not quite enough, though...

I will ask questions just like this, so please relax. What I would like to know is your impression about the packaging itself. For example, your standard for preferable package, convenience of the package or a size of the package. In addition, I'd like to have your opinion about the material of the package. There are a couple of things that I would like you to keep in mind. First, speak clearly one at a time and try not to use non verbal expressions for the purpose of transcription. Second, please do not hesitate to express yourself. Is there anyone who has seen these TV dinners in Japan? You probably don't see these, right? All of you have an advantage over the consumers in Japan with respect to the fact that you are familiar with frozen whole meal products. I consider you representatives of those who have been exposed to this product, as advanced consumers. Do you have any questions? So, let's get started. Could you briefly tell us your name, how long you have been in the United States and when you are going back to Japan. I assume that your husbands are office workers. Is that correct? Also, could you explain your food habits, how often and where you went grocery shopping in Japan in comparison to your shopping frequency in the United States.

My name is _____. I have been in the States for two years. I went grocery shopping in a small super market such as a co-op every other day, by bike when I was in Japan. Here, I go shopping once or twice a week, by car. I have a fifth grader and a second grader. I'll be staying here for three more years.

My name is _____. I have three children. The oldest is fifteen years old, the second one is thirteen years old and the youngest is eight years old. I have been here for two years. I went grocery shopping every other day in Japan. I also bought items directly from the farmers. Here, I go shopping once or twice a week. I might be going back to Japan this summer, at the earliest.

My name is _____. I've been here for two and a half years. I have two children, who are ten years old and six years old. When I was in Japan, I basically went shopping once or twice a week and I made another trip in case I needed to buy a couple of things. Here, I also shop once or twice a week. I drove to a big supermarket when I was in Japan and so do here in the States. For additional shopping, I used a shop near my place. I'll be staying here for three more years.

My name is _____. I've been here almost for a year. I have a nine-year old boy. As for grocery shopping in Japan, I went to a small shop near my place every day and to a big supermarket once a week. Here, I go shopping three or four times a week. I'll be staying here for two more years.

My name is _____. I have two children, who are twelve years old and ten years old. I've been here almost for three years. When I was in Japan, I went to a big supermarket once a week and to a shop near my place for perishables every other day. Here, I go shopping twice a week and also make another trip to a Japanese grocery store. I'll be here for two more years.

My name is _____. I went shopping once or twice a week by car when I was in Japan, and the same here in the States. I have a child who is sixteen years old here in the U.S., and he eats TV dinners, and have another child in Japan. I've been here almost two years. I'll probably go back to Japan when my child graduates from high school, but I think I'll come back to the States afterwards.

My name is _____. I have four children. The oldest is twelve years old, the second one is eleven years old, the third one is ten years old and the youngest one is two and a half years old. This is my fifth year in the States. I don't think we can go back to Japan, soon. Maybe five more years. I went shopping once a week since I had a job when I was in Japan. Here, I also go once a week, not every single day. As for frozen foods, I buy them since my children like them. But those products tend to cost a lot because our family is kind of big.

My name is _____. I have two children, one is nine years old, and the other is seven years old. I've been here for two and a half years and I think I'll probably be staying here for

another year. As for grocery shopping, I used a co-op most of the time when I was in Japan. I also went to a small store near my place three times a week including a trip which was only for asking for delivery. Here, I go to a Japanese grocery shop once a week and to a supermarket three or four times.

So, four or five times a week. How do you get to the store?

By car.

My name is _____. I have two children. One is nine years old, and the other is four years old. I've been here almost for three and a half years, and I think I will be here for the next one and a half years. When I was in Japan, I went to a co-op once a week. There were three grocery shops near my place. Though they were fairly small, I used them almost every day. Here, I go shopping once a week.

I've been here for two and a half years, and I'll be here for two and a half more years. I have a daughter who is five-years old. I go grocery shopping on weekends and make another trip when I need something. When I was in Japan, I drove to a big supermarket once a week. As for perishables, I walked to a small store near my place to get fresh food such as fish.

My name is _____. I have a twelve-year old daughter and a six-year old son. When I was in Japan, I used a co-op most of the time. As for perishables, I bought them at small specialty stores. Here, I go to a supermarket once a week and to a Japanese grocery store twice.

Does your husband help with your grocery shopping? Does he come with you every time?

No, not really. Once or twice on weekends.

Does your husband cook for you? Five of you raised your hands.

Once in a while.

On Sundays. I sleep in on Sundays, so my husband fixes something like ramen noodles not only for himself but also for the children.

Could you tell me if your husband does not cook at all? None. Hm, in the previous group whose members are not living with children, all of them said that their husbands did not cook except for one. It's a big contrast, isn't it?

Hhmm. (laughter)

Let's get to the point. First of all, tell me about your standard for grocery shopping.

Freshness.

Brand.

When I was in Japan, I was worried about food additives since my children were young at that time. Dating, too. But here, I came to not to pay much attention to them.

I do care about the additives. I think there are a lot of products with many additives.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Let's go back to "freshness". How do you define "freshness"?

Color or gloss, maybe.

What about something that is packed? Do you consider such a product fresh?

Best-if-used-by-date. I check those.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

What about quantity? The more products on the shelf the better, because this indicates that they just recently arrived.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

The fact that you go shopping quite often shows that you want fresh food. Is that correct?

Right.

Do you consider the expiration date?

Of course. Especially for eggs, milk or ham.

It was quite surprising to know that eggs can be used for a month in the States compared to the fact that I felt three or four days old eggs were not fresh at all when I was in Japan. As for tofu, some of them can be used within a year and that also shocked me. Though before, I could not buy them, I'm getting used to it now.

As a matter of fact, we can not use them quickly.

What about eggs? Aren't they the same?

I tried to get the one in the bottom of piled packages of eggs, but the expiration date was same.

Right.

You don't want to pull down the pile, do you? (laugh)

I try to choose the shop which rotates food quickly.

So do I.

[Everyone is talking at the same time. Conversation is drifting. The conversation is not distinguishable.]

Someone mentioned additives before. Do you have any comments about them?

Yes, when I was in Japan.

Then why don't you pay much attention to it here?

We have no choice here, so even if the product includes additives in it, it's better than nothing.

The reason why I went to a co-op in Japan was that I found out that my husband had an allergy to a particular additive. Since then, I try to avoid anything that is waxed or has preservatives applied. When I saw the glossy fruits here, I could not buy any of them because I was scared. But there was no choice. Everything looks fancy with wax.

(many of them) I agree.

What else do you pay attention to? Freshness, date and additives.

Taste comes next. It's important to know whether my children like the product or not. So, I'm inclined to purchase something that my children will like.

Right. Taste is important.

When I was in Japan, I did not make mistakes in choosing food, I think.

Any other comments?

I'm worried about salt, so I always check the label and choose low salt stuff.

My choice of food is sometimes influenced by my children's reaction to the TV advertisement.

Give me an example.

For example, ice cream or packed baby carrots. I think TV advertisements are quite influential.

Didn't you forget something that is important?

Price? I did pay attention to it when I was in Japan. But here the price is quite low.

I sometimes think the low price does not help.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

What do you think about price, brand and quality?

The more expensive, the better, I think.

Which one do you buy, the expensive one or the less expensive one.

The expensive one.

Is that so? What about you?

I don't think the expensive one is always better. I would try one of each, then decide which one I should buy. If there is no difference in the quality, I think I would buy the less expensive one. Though generally speaking, the more expensive, the better.

When I moved here, I had no clue about choosing good products. All I could do was to choose the expensive one. Once I got acquainted with someone, the shopping became easier since I could have my friends' suggestions.

I don't buy the most expensive one or the least expensive one. I have my own standard depending on what I need to buy. I'm trying to choose somewhere in between. I do not buy the cheapest one. I usually choose the one which is relatively inexpensive.

I choose a store to shop. If you shop there, there is no mistake.

[The conversation is not distinguishable.]

It is in Northville.

The shop rotates products quickly.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I have smelled bleach in the fish section.

[Conversation drifted to another topic.]

I purchase fish in a Japanese grocery shop. When I bought shrimp in a supermarket, they smelled really bad. Since then, I seldom buy shrimp.

Meijer's shrimp is better, I think?

[Conversation drifted to another topic. Conversation is not distinguishable.]

What else do you pay attention to when you go shopping?

I try to buy yogurt with less sugar.

I see. The amount of sugar. Additives and sugar. What about "low fat"?

I can not drink diet cola at all.

Low fat products taste bad.

Right.

What's the difference between "low fat" and "low calorie"?

To my knowledge, low calorie includes carbohydrates, but low fat has less fat, I think.

I don't read the nutrition facts closely, but knowing the calorie content of food products is good enough for me. I got the impression that the more convenient a product is, the higher its calorie content is.

Then what do you think about choosing between an expensive food product or a less expensive one?

I'll choose low calorie products.

Do you take calories into consideration? Do you think you look at nutrition facts when purchasing food products?

I think what matters is the calorie content of the whole meal, but not that of an ingredient.

What else? How many of you consider packaging?

Are you talking about something like ease of opening?

Right. That's an example.

I think the contents of food products should be visible.

A picture on the package?

What kind of package was used for milk, when you were in Japan?

Paper package.

After you moved here, did you find any problem?

I'm inclined to buy milk in the paper package, but not the one in the plastic.

How many of you buy milk in the paper package? What a surprise!

We cannot easily finish up even smaller size.

Is that right?

I usually buy milk in the big plastic jug, then additionally buy another small paper carton of milk.

So it's the matter of quantity.

Right. It's also true that I tend to choose the food products which are in the package that I'm familiar with.

How often do you buy milk?

Once a week.

In my case, five times a week.

Then why don't you buy the large plastic gallon?

Actually I do. My oldest daughter drinks a lot and so do her brothers. They drink milk just like water. I think I can store numbers of gallons of milk since they don't get rotten, but I'm suspicious about what makes milk drinkable that long.

Have you done any sorting of recyclable garbage and trash in Japan?

Yes.

Is there anything that you discovered or took into consideration regarding it? Did you think about it when purchasing?

Not really, when I shop.

I tried to keep the amount of trash as small as possible. I noticed that frozen food products are boxed in most of the cases, here. I found some frozen food products which were not boxed when I was in Japan.

How many of you want to keep the amount of trash as small as possible?

I do, but...

But you don't take it into consideration, when purchasing?

I'm living in an apartment now. As you may know, we don't have to separate trash, so I don't consider disposability any more when purchasing.

I envy you.

You don't care any more in the U.S., but you did when you were in Japan.

Right. Neighbors might have criticized me if I did not care.

It's true.

Who has not experienced the sorting of recyclable garbage and trash? Who was required to separate glass from aluminum cans and steel cans? Everyone.

It was also required to crush them.

Newspaper, too.

You have to wash the milk cartons, and bring them back to a supermarket to recycle.

Can't you dispose them of?

No, not like that. It is voluntary (for the environment).

How many of you have washed the milk cartons and taken them to a supermarket? Seven. What about meat trays?

There is not any deposit system, but we did recycle them on a voluntary basis.

I've done it. The school my children went to organized recycling.

Do you think you are positively involved in recycling in the United States?

Not really.

I bring cans to the supermarket, since you can get the deposit back.

Yes, I definitely do.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Some people earn a living by recycling.

Is that so?

One of my neighbors says that she brings garbage to a particular place in her community.

I see. I heard that there is a recycling center in each community. Let's move on to frozen food products. What do frozen food products remind you of?

Vegetables and chicken nuggets.

What about Japanese frozen food products?

Shumai (dumplings).

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

When I was in Japan, I only used something that need to be cooked.

Now recall what was in the freezer when you were in Japan.

Ice cream, fish that you can not buy around there

Coffee beans, tea or croquette.

Croquette. Was it fried or not?

I had the one which needed to be fried.

There are croquette which you can microwave, recently.

I used a lot of them for my children's box lunches.

How many of you feel embarrassed when you say that you are using frozen food products?

Not really.

Using frozen food products might be considered being lazy.

My children don't like frozen food products, even if I cook them.

Five of you said that you feel guilty when using frozen food products and the rest of you don't. Do you think your attitude toward frozen food products has been changed compared to that of five or ten years ago?

I do not use them always, but do make use of them when I'm busy for taking my children to their lessons. There was a sale on frozen foods at a store near my place, and I usually buy some of them then.

I used them when my husband was not home because of a business trip, but I don't use them much for dinner, because the quantity is not enough.

Me, neither. I don't use frozen food products as the main dish. I use them as an additional dish.

Which type of frozen food products did you use more, a whole meal or ingredients?

When my children were little, I used them as side dishes for their lunch. As the children grew up, I started to use whole meals. So it depends on the children's age, I think...

Why do you feel guilty for using frozen food products?

When the frozen foods were not popular, I hesitated to purchase them. I was not using them all the time, but I admit that they are convenient. I think the sense of value of frozen food products has been changed.

When you make meals or snacks for your family, you do not have to consider additives since you make them, and you can put your love in them. Children may watch me making it, and feel something that they are being taken care of, and do it themselves, I think.

[Utterance is not distinguishable.]

How many of you positively use frozen food products? Who does not want to use them?

I did not use frozen dumplings since both of my sons ate a lot, and it cost a lot if I used them.

The amount is not enough for a family, and it costs less if you make it.

My husband used to eat dinner in the company cafeteria and was able to eat a nutritious lunch when he was in Japan. But here, he buys hamburgers or sandwiches, instead. He sometimes takes a frozen food product with him when I can not make a box lunch for him, and microwaves it at work, but I have an image that eating such a frozen whole meal is not good for his health.

What kind of impression do you have of frozen food products?

Additives?

They are not healthy.

They tend to be greasy.

When frozen products came out, I tried some of them, and I got an impression that they didn't taste good. Also, they were expensive and not good for your health.

When was it?

When I was little. Before I moved here, frozen pilaf (cooked rice) came out. I found that it tasted good and my children liked it. If a frozen product is less expensive, delicious and does not include much additives in it, I will go ahead and purchase it.

The co-op store has good foods, which do not have any additives, and are also inexpensive.

I think the frozen foods have been developed.

Yes, the taste has been getting better

(many agreed)

Do you have an impression that frozen food products became more appetizing lately?

Japanese products are good. It's because I'm familiar with them.

A frozen food company developed a variety of products for the party setting including Japanese, Chinese and Western food. I know that many consumers are using such products.

There is a frozen food product day at school once every month, which is called "market day", and each class competes in the sales.

Is it sponsored by a frozen food company?

Most of the products include high percentages of sodium or fat, so I don't like them. But cheese cake was pretty good.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Ingredients are pretty good, I think.

What about the size of your freezer? How many of you have two refrigerators? No. How small was your refrigerator in Japan compared to the one you have here? What did you store in your freezer?

I have a refrigerator a little bit smaller than the Americans, but I had a separate freezer, just for frozen foods.

Juice, fruits, mix vegetables, fish and meat. Basic ingredients.

Is there any difference in frequency of purchasing frozen food products? Has your image toward frozen food products been changed since you moved to the States?

I started to purchase frozen pizza quite often here in the U.S. They were quite small and expensive and used only for snacks in Japan. Here, if we add vegetables or cheese, it can be a whole dinner.

Frozen pizza came out in Japan, too.

But it must be expensive.

When I was in Japan, I went to a confectionery when I wanted cakes. Here I buy frozen ones here.

What else? Someone mentioned that you used chicken nuggets.

I started using them after I moved here. All I have to do is to bake them for ten minutes in the oven, so it's good for lunch. Also, I use frozen chicken thighs, shrimp or udon (Japanese style noodles).

I found that a frozen pack of lotus root is less expensive and easy to cook in comparison to a fresh one.

Does it taste good?

It is convenient and relatively inexpensive.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Frozen ingredients are sometimes relatively more inexpensive than fresh ones.

Frozen food products are moderate in price.

Right.

We are talking about why we use frozen food products. Is it because they are moderate in price? Are they convenient? How are they convenient?

It saves another trip to the supermarket.

It saves time for cooking.

You can save your time for cooking and store the product for a long time.

[Conversation is drifting to a different topic.]

You mentioned that frozen foods can be stored for a long time. How long do you store them in the freezer? How do they circulate, especially for the one that you use frequently?

One week, maybe.

Does one week make a good cycle? How long do you keep them?

(everyone agreed) One month at most.

What do you do after one month?

If it passed the expiration date, I will throw it away.

Three months?

So basically you spend one week for circulation, one month for storage, then three months for a final decision. In the previous group, they said that they spend one month for circulation, and two or three months for storage. Then, after three to six months, they throw the product away. Compared to them, one week circulation is a short time, isn't it? What makes the difference?

It depends on frequency of use, I think.

Also number of family members. How many of you do not have a microwave at home? No one. Who did not have one when living in Japan? No one. It seems that everyone had one and has one now. How did you use the microwave?

To heat rice or leftovers, defrost a frozen food product or heat alcohol.

Let's move on to "TV dinners", then. How many of you used TV dinners before? Six of you. Let me ask a question for those of you who don't use TV dinners. Why don't you use them?

[Laughter.]

Then, why do you use them? Who eats them?

My children. They seem to like TV dinners for lunch, not for dinner.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I don't eat TV dinners, but my children do.

I do not want cook three times a day, so just for lunch, I sometimes use them. There are many husbands who do not like western foods, but my husband has no problem with them. So, I cook some frozen food items for his lunch such as stuffed chicken or something. But I don't like them.

My children have gotten used to eat frozen whole meals, but I can not eat them. So, I sometimes use them for them, not for me.

When I did not have any kitchen ware, I bought some TV dinners since a microwave was furnished in my apartment. The TV dinners I bought at Meijer were very salty, though I might have chosen bad ones. Anyway, since then I have not bought any. I have lasagna, though.

There is a delicatessen here. If I use the deli, I may not have to use frozen food products. But my family like TV dinners, though.

Due to the bad experience I had, I backed off of buying TV dinners. Instead, I serve easy Japanese food such as ochazuke (a kind of rice dish). In addition, TV dinners are quite expensive if you buy them for a whole family, I think.

How much are the frozen whole meals?

Less expensive ones are about one dollar.

What do you call a frozen whole meal? Some kind of food items on one plate?

Basically, yes. The etymology is the dinner which is cooked while watching TV. Do you use frozen whole meals?

Sometimes. When my husband is not home, and I have some rice for me, and just for the kids. When I ask the children which is good, pizza, or fast food, or frozen whole meal, they choose frozen whole meals.

My children learned which TV dinners are good when their friends were eating them. So, when I go shopping with my children, they can tell which TV dinners are good.

Which one is good?

My children said pasta with meat balls or tuna.

So you and your husband eat home cooked meals, and your children eat TV dinners?

My husband eats a TV dinner for lunch and my children sometimes eat mashed potatoes, fried chicken or hamburgers. I don't eat them, though.

They are not good, are they?

When I bought a TV dinner, I wondered if the whole thing is heated up equally.

And actually, they are usually not heated-up equally.

Did you use a conventional oven or a microwave? Everyone used the microwave.

The oven requires a half an hour or so. But I admit that a dish is well cooked when I use the oven.

In the previous group, only one person said that she used a microwave.

(everyone) Is that so?

Why do you use a microwave?

Because it's faster.

My children cook a TV dinner by themselves using a microwave. They use the microwave themselves, and it is safer than use of conventional ovens. It is also ready in minutes.

Do you think a microwave is more safe than an oven?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I try all of the frozen whole meals that my children have, just a little. There are some I cannot eat, but there are some that are OK.

Children like TV dinners. My children learned which TV dinners were good when they slept over at their friend's place.

Who can eat TV dinners? How about yourself?

I can eat cooked rice. When I have nothing left but frozen meals, I eat them alone.

This is a question for those of you who do not use TV dinners. Could you explain why you don't use them?

They don't taste good.

My husband does not like American food. Neither do my children. So eventually, I need to choose Japanese products even if they are expensive. If I buy TV dinners, no one will eat them, and I'll end up throwing them away. If that happens, it's not quite economical, either. If the same selection that is made in Japan, they like them.

What types of TV dinners will be popular in Japan? I'm talking about TV dinners which are made for the Japanese taste, by Japanese companies.

Pilaf (cooked rice), boiled rice or boiled fish. Something like Japanese boxed lunches might be popular.

Well, we can get a good warm food at a delicatessen, so if a TV dinner is less expensive, people might buy it.

Are there any other quick complete meal products besides TV dinners?

Udon, maybe. It is warm and good.

Can a TV dinner beat a box lunch?

If it is less expensive.

How much should it be?

\$5?

What about box lunch?

It's about \$3 to \$4. So, a TV dinner should be around \$3, otherwise it cannot compete with a box lunch.

There might be a way if a TV dinner is used for snacks such as a meat-bun or a dumpling. In Japan, children can walk to shops to get their snacks. But not here.

[conversation is not distinguishable.]

It might be good to have something western, I think. If the meal is a Japanese dish, sometimes it's not good to have "hot" items that should not be hot.

So you are saying that a TV dinner which is western style will be popular. Who will be the target?

We were talking about children so far.

Students or singles who do not like cooking.

If it is an usual thing, you have many other good choices. How about something that is hard to get? It will be popular.

I see. What about the price?

It can be quite expensive, if it tastes good.

Something like “special box lunch from a famous hotel”. It costs about \$20 or \$30, so make it less expensive than that.

[Conversation is drifting.]

Maybe \$15. If it tastes good.

Yeah, such as some Chinese cuisine, from a famous restaurant.

Frozen food, but quite good.

[Conversation is drifting.]

So it should be expensive or inexpensive to sell more in Japan for each target.

Someone mentioned that a TV dinner might be used for gift giving. It is one of the possibilities, or isn't it?

It could be, if a TV dinner is as good as fancy Chinese dishes. Taste comes first.

I once had a frozen Chinese cuisine as a gift, and it tasted good, actually.

[Utterance is not distinguishable.] Or something that is characteristic in every region.

They can be \$10 or more. What about something that is more casual?

If the TV dinners indicate nutrition facts clearly, consumers might buy them.

As for a prepared food, they will be popular if they have more quantity and a lower price.

The lower price is the key point over prepared foods.

Right.

Something that takes time to cook such as kinpiragobou (Japanese traditional dish, which is difficult to cook).

I see.

There might be a demand for such a thing by senior citizens.

They do not make such a meal for themselves. It takes time, and is difficult to make just a little. So such a dish might be good as frozen items.

A family with children and seniors may need different types of dishes. There might be a case that children eat Western food and older people eat Japanese food. It is convenient if there are such meals.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

If it tastes good, it can be accepted by senior citizens, I think.

I want something I can use when I can not take care of my family, easy-to-cook, tasting good. I don't think men of my family will go shopping instead of me.

One type is for children and it is less expensive. Another is for housewives and it is something that is fancy and therefore preferable. Then one is for older people and has a Japanese flavor. Another one is for housewives in case their husbands are not home. How much would a reasonable price be?

Moderate? Around \$4 for husband.

If it cost more than \$5, he will go out for dinner.

What about the one for children?

\$2 to \$3.

But I have to consider additives for children. I won't let them eat them every day.

Not only inexpensive, but it should have no additives and be nutritious.

You don't use them when your husband is at home. But you use them for children's lunches. Don't you use them for dinner?

Maybe when my husband is not home because of a business trip.

When I run out of time.

So basically, a TV dinner is used when a housewife does not have enough time for cooking. Not for a regular meal.

How often do you use them? How often is the "no time to cook"?

Twice a week.

Isn't it quite often?

The thing is that I cannot tell when I get busy. So, I need to keep something just in case.

When I went grocery shopping with my children, they asked me to buy a product whose package had animation characters on it. They are attracted to those things.

For children taste does not necessarily come first. They pay more attention to the appearance of a product. Good sushi cannot beat a tasteless product whose package has animation characters on it. In my youngest daughter's case, she wants to get Hello Kitty stuff. A TV dinner with a package whose shape looks like a bear will be popular among children, if it's edible at least.

Do you consider name brands when purchasing?

You mean now, here in the U.S?

In the future, in Japan.

[Conversation is drifting.]

How often do you buy frozen food products?

I think it is going to cost a lot.

Well, even if each product costs \$2 to \$3, it will be quite expensive, if you have two or three kids, for one meal.

Let's say \$1.50 each.

People might be suspicious if it's that cheap.

I buy frozen products just in case, so the price does not really matter. Brand might come next.

No. Taste comes first after all.

If someone like Katsuyo Kobayashi (famous chef) is advertising a frozen food product such as curry, it might appeal to consumers.

I think frozen food products from famous brands such as House (one of the biggest Japanese food company) will be popular, but not the ones from a unknown company.

Right. An unknown company needs to appeal to consumers by demonstrating its product.

Do you buy a lot of frozen food products at one time?

I will buy a little at first for a trial.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

After I confirm for myself, that is good, I might buy a lot.

Let's move on the packaging itself. What is required for packaging? Someone mentioned that nutrition facts need to be indicated. Animation characters might be effective to appeal to children. Additives need to be considered, too. Generally speaking, what should be considered in terms of packaging?

Ease of opening.

Someone mentioned that the contents should be visible.

I found that there is a gap between the picture of the content and the contents themselves.

What kind of picture do you want to see on the surface of the package for a frozen whole meal?

A picture which looks delicious. For example, a cooked dish with steam coming off it.

Does it matter whether the contents are served on a packaged tray or a different plate?

A different plate sets off the contents.

What kind of picture do you like?

Appearance of the content should not be exaggerated. But it's O.K. to show an example of how to set off the contents using a different plate.

Don't you like to eat out of the original tray?

Well, it spoils the mood.

It's O.K. for children or housewives.

As for students, they buy a TV dinner because they want to eat meals out of the packaged tray.

So you are saying that a tray should be used in the picture.

It's easy to dispose. Flammable is good.

How many of you think that a tray should be used in the picture?

It depends on the target.

How do you eat a TV dinner? Do you eat it out of a tray or put it on a different plate?

For a guest, I will use a different plate, but not for myself.

(many of them agreed) Of course I use the packaged tray.

There should not be a big difference between actual food and the picture.

Can I go back to the tray and its disposability?

In Japan we separate flammable and inflammable. So, flammable is better.

How many of you care about packaging in terms of its disposability? What if there is the same product in a flammable package or inflammable one? Which do you like better?

I really don't care about it now, but in Japan I will feel uncomfortable with having a large amount of garbage. For example, people living in the apartment complex are supposed to classify garbage and trash, so they seem to make it as small as possible.

Do you have any comments?

Paper products cause felling of forests, so a material which is recyclable and flammable.

There seems to be a difference between disposability and recyclability. Do you prefer to dispose or to recycle?

I want to dispose.

I like something that is stable in some degree.

Yes, I think so too. When you microwave the meal, the package should be stiff after cooking. If it gets soft, it is difficult to handle and not safe.

I have an opinion somewhat different. The instructions say peel off the film. But I don't want the contents to scatter, so I leave it on.

You don't have to peel it off. All you have to do is to open the edge.

Is that so?

My children use a toothpick and complain that it takes time to open it. They said the package should have some holes originally.

(It seemed that many of them had some problems with confusing directions.)

But don't you feel uncomfortable if it has some holes?

Right.

Are there any other suggestions for the ease of opening or comments on the film?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

The cooking directions differ with each dish, I think.

When heating, the sauce comes out, so I have to put it on another plate after all.

Who definitely changes the plate when you eat a TV dinner? No one?

I do not replace the foods, but use a plate as a holder.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Which do you prefer, disposing or recycling? Who would like to recycle? For example, do you like to collect the paper milk package and recycle them? Or do you prefer disposing of them?

It's not still clear to me what will happen after you collect such paper packages, and recycle them.

It will be turned into rolled paper or some other products.

[Conversation is not distinguishable]

Did you know that a new law was established on April 1st in Japan. It is called the "recycling law" and it says that collection of classified garbage and rubbish is required. You need to separate steel cans, from aluminum cans, and paper packages. In addition, glass needs to be separated by color.

You even have to wash the bottle and to peel the label off.

The lid should be separated from the bottle because it's plastic.

What a surprise!

After you heard this story, what material will you choose?

It has to be easy to dispose of.

[Utterance is not distinguishable.]

What kind of information regarding packaging should be provided? What about the shape?

Shape?

Do you prefer a bigger one, a round one or a soft one?

Considering the storage in the freezer, square is better.

What about the quantity of TV dinners?

It's quite small.

The amount is not enough, my children said.

If it is too big, it is difficult to be evenly heated up in a microwave oven.

[Utterance is not distinguishable.]

What about the indication of nutrition facts or additives? Do you see them?

(some of them) I do.

Is there an expiration date?

Yes. Old products seem to be on sale.

Is there any preference regarding color of packaging?

Lighter colors, maybe.

Right. They are better than darker colors such as brown or black.

What about the name of the TV dinner?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Do you consider the brand? Do you prefer food products made in Japan?

Yes. Japanese brands are reliable.

As for frozen food products, most of them are made in foreign countries such as south eastern Asia.

Here, we have no choice. For example, I buy canned bamboo shoots.

You prefer something made in Japan, right? But it's true that products that are manufactured in the foreign countries are less expensive.

It depends on the product and the country from where it is manufactured.

Most of the food companies have their branches in foreign countries. Someone mentioned ease of opening. What makes the opening of the box easy?

Perforated edges. Also, the plate of a TV dinner is hard to pick up and the lid is difficult peel off after it's been heated and I'm afraid that my children will get burned. It is difficult to handle after opening, since there is almost no place to hold.

What about the film lid?

It's hard to peel it off. Also, the plate of a TV dinner is hard to pick up after it's been heated.

The bottom of the plate is very hot and I'm afraid that it ruins the table.

The package should be easy to handle after cooking.

How about using a box as a holder?

Good idea!

There is a package something like that in Japan for gratin or something.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

How about a thick lid for a holder?

What do you think about overwrapping?

I really don't think about it.

As for soy sauce, it should be in the plastic bottle.

Let me make the point clear. Do you consider a box overwrapping? Do you prefer a more simplified one?

(many of them) I like a boxed one better.

Now I would like you to look at these packages. Have you seen this type of package (paperboard tray with paperboard lid)? The contents are put in the box. This one is about one dollar fifty.

Really. It's quite cheap.

It looks tasty. This may be good.

What do you think of this type of tray?

It's good.

I don't like it very much.

How many of you don't like this tray? Just two. What about convenience of use?

It looks flammable.

It is better than a plastic bag.

Have you seen this before? Can you get this anywhere?

Perhaps. You can get it at Meijer's.

It looks good.

As for taste, please check it out by yourself.

[conversation is not distinguishable.]

What impression did you have?

I think it's O.K.

How do you heat it up?

You cut the edge of the tray before you heat it up.

I see. I didn't know.

This one is quite easy to be opened by pulling this edge (the second package, paperboard tray, easy-open type). Then, you peel this film off before you eat.

Does this one include an aluminum tray in the box?

No, you eat out of this box. Which one do you like better?

This one. This one looks easy to open and handle.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

But I do not like the lid, which can not be remove.

Do you prefer to remove the lid?

Yes.

[Conversation is drifting.]

What about the third one (paper folding tray, not compartmentalized, with paper sleeve)?

It looks not safe enough, I think. You can put some poison in it with a needle. (laughter)

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

It may be difficult to store, because the shape is not good enough.

This package actually is tamper evident. Once you open the package, you can see it..

I think this is better. This looks firm and sophisticated.

I do not like it...

Which one looks sealed enough?

This one (paperboard tray).

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

What about this one (compartmentalized paper folding tray)? This one is hard to peel off. On this tray, you have corn, chicken nuggets with barbecue sauce and mashed potatoes. The cooking directions are kind of difficult. Remove the lid over the potatoes...

I don't like it. It is difficult to prepare.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

My children like that one. They say that this type is prettier or something.

How about these trays (fiber molded tray)?

This one (fiber molded) looks tasty.

This one (paper folding tray) looks cheap.

Is this paper? If so, I like the firm one.

This is good. Looks tasty.

This one has a pattern on it. How many of you like this one (white one)? Eight of you. Who does not care? Three of you. Who likes some kind of pattern on the tray?

If the target is children, a teddy bear might be good.

It does not matter. If there is some printing, it is better, but if there is not, it is still OK.

If it cost more, I do not want it.

If it does, it should be a cuter one, such as animation characters.

If children can use the tray as a toy after they are washed, a pretty pattern is preferable.

It might be useful for their desk.

If so, the square one is good.

Have you seen this before (for kids meal)? This is a similar type to the last one. A brownie is in it. There are some packages for desserts.

So, if the school allows children to use a microwave, they can bring this kind to school.

Maybe.

It will not work in the Japanese schools since they have school lunches.

But if there is a small company that can not afford a breakroom, it may be useful, I think.

What about this plastic one?

Is this for dumplings?

Yes, it is, and fried rice is put in this box.

Is it good?

Please check it out for yourself.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

This one is a plate with compartments.

I like that one better.

That one sets off the meat.

Are you talking about the picture? Let's take a look one by one. Which one do you prefer, plastic or paper? Everyone seems to like paper better.

[Conversation is not distinguishable]

I don't know about it, but there is a possibility that the plastic package can be harmful with the use of microwave oven?

I do not want to dispose of this plastic tray, but I can dispose of a paper tray.

All I can say is that it is not that harmful.

Even if it is on the market, you can not say it has no problem (of migration).

You can not say it is harmful, but actually there is some migration from the package, and it may be deposited in your body, maybe. Now, what do you think of the color black?

The tray color black reminds me of "U.S.A.".

What about a tray? Should it be compartmentalized, or not?

The compartmentalized one is better.

Do you have any comments? What about the picture? These two show the contents which are served on the original tray. But others don't.

I see.

For kids, this picture (on the actual package) is better because it looks tasty and convenient.

The alligator (small animation character) is good.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I think the color (purple) of the package is more impressive than a name brand, especially, in case the brand is not famous. For example, you might say "I want that purple one."

You can put different characters for each different meal. So, children can easily remember.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

This one is a Japanese frozen food package. This has both a plastic bag and a box with a tray. Do you consider this overwrapping?

Yes, I do.

Isn't it paper?

No, it is plastic. The material is the same as this one.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Did you put this on a plate after you microwaved it?

Let me see. I think I did.

It cannot be directly put on the table. A paper towel or a plate is required, I think.

I have bought this type before.

Which one do you prefer, a lid or a bag?

I like the one in which the contents are visible.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

Which one do you like the best? What about the first one (paperboard tray with paperboard lid)? Nine of you. You don't mind that the contents are directly put in the box. In Japan, this packaging is triple wrapped.

What about the contents? They don't come out during distribution, do they.

You don't have to worry about it.

If there is a hole or the box is damaged, something might happen.

In fact, here, I can't say that these products are not treated gently. Who wants double packaging?

I think that one is hard to dispose of. The first one is easy to pile and to dispose.

Who thinks the third packaging (paper folding tray, with sleeve) is fine?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

How about the fourth one (compartmentalized paper folding tray)? You do not like this much.

How about plastic ones. You really like paper ones. OK. What about the color? Which one do you like better, black or white?

(many of them) I like white better.

What needs to be improved? What about the color of the box? White, orange and green.

I think brighter colors are more appealing to consumers. I don't think about the color very much.

What about black?

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

What impression did you get?

This one looks bad.

Don't you like this picture?

I think the one from Meijer is too simple.

Does black give you a "fancy" impression?

It reminds me of the Chinese.

Did you have the same impression when you were in Japan?

This is the last question for you. When you buy a TV dinner, what do you consider the most important?

Taste comes first.

So you are giving us a situation that we are not provided any information regarding the TV dinner?

Right.

Then, yes, taste comes first.

I might try noodles, but not meat.

What will be the standard when you buy a TV dinner whose target is for Japanese? Also, how often are you going to buy it? Can I have your opinion one by one?

I'll choose the one which looks appetizing.

How often are you going to buy it?

Probably once or twice a week.

Do you think you may use a TV dinner as a regular meal?

No, I don't think so.

Me neither. I think I'll probably choose udon or something, instead of buying a TV dinner.

Is there any possibility that you will keep it in the freezer?

Well, one per month, maybe. I prefer good warm udon.

That standard does not seem to be changed.

No. I think the taste of a TV dinner does not correlate with its price. I cannot imagine that I would use TV dinners as regular meals.

I think I would buy it once or twice a month.

So you are saying that there is a possibility that you will keep it in the freezer.

Right.

How many?

A total of four for each of my family.

So you think that should be enough, then add some later on.

I think I will keep some all the time.

Is that so? How many?

One for each of my family members.

I think I can make use of TV dinners as snacks for children.

How often?

Per week? At least three of four. Not a whole week, but about half.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

I'm not quite sure, but if the content of a TV dinner is something like sweet and sour pork, I will want to buy it once a week.

Actually, there is the type of TV dinner. It's called "Chinese specialty stores".

Is that so? Otherwise, I will store a part of a cooked dish.

Are you going to buy them when you go back to Japan?

It depends if I work outside or not, but..., probably three times a week. If I decide to work, I'll keep them whether or not I use them.

[Conversation is not distinguishable.]

In fact, the number of working women who are married is increasing.

What do you consider the most important?

I think I'll use a TV dinner which contents are used for a main dish once a week. I'll keep some for my children's snacks. So, during summer break or spring break, we might use them twice a week.

I consider the brand when purchasing something that I don't know. Then if I find that it's good for a main dish, I will use it once a week, as a side dish. As for a TV dinner as a snack for my children, I might buy one per month, though I'm worried about additives.

I think I will keep two just in case. I consider brand and taste to be most important.

Thank you very much. Do you have any comments?

Though I just said that I might use a TV dinner for my children during spring break, but if they are expensive I would not do that.

How much is a reasonable price? \$2?

Right.

So you mainly use them for children.

Well, I want to use them just in case. I have the impression that a frozen product can be used all the time because it doesn't matter what fruits or vegetables are in season. Frozen food product's prices are always stable. I may not use TV dinners as a main dish, but I think they are very useful.

I think I will use a lot of them since my son is growing and eats a lot of meat.

TV dinners might be good for growing children.

So it depends on the family...

Thank you very much. That will be all.

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