

## Overview

Sensory Evaluation has traditionally supported Research & Development efforts and has focused on testing with small numbers of skilled judges in a carefully controlled environment. A recent movement across American industry to team management is removing barriers which previously segregated responsibility for product evaluation. As a result, many sensory professionals find their role expanding beyond traditional laboratory orientation as they address consumer research issues once considered the sole responsibility of Marketing.

This new consumer orientation requires sensory professionals to have a working knowledge of consumer research issues and consumer product evaluation methods.

A fundamental requirement to any consumer research study is the correct identification of an appropriate consumer test subject. Use of general recruiting criteria will identify consumers who may not represent current or potential users. The results of this type of study will be equally generalized and run the high risk of marketing a product to a phantom target group.

Demographic classifications such as age, gender, ethnic background, and product usage are important criteria in identification of a target population. Cultural habits, language barriers, and literacy are other areas to be considered. Recent research indicates that a basic taste preference may provide an alternate means of identifying and targeting specific consumers. Effort spent in identifying the criteria for selection of target consumers and in development of a recruiting questionnaire to locate these consumers should be considered as an important part of the overall test design.

Sensory testing methods must be examined to suit the particular needs of the selected target consumers. Children may require different test methods than adults. Cultural differences among specific groups must be taken into account.

In the papers that follow, four case studies are provided which illustrate the need to identify a specific group of target consumers. In each study, the researcher was challenged to modify test protocol to meet the needs of the unique consumer group while not compromising test integrity.

The success of new product entries will be enhanced by identification of target consumers and modification of testing methods to address the specific needs of each group.

**Katy Word,**  
Coors Brewing Company  
Golden, CO, Session Chairman