

Abstract

Why Young Adults (18–30 Years Old) Consume Dairy Foods: A Qualitative Study to Explore and Identify Reasons for Dairy Consumption in the UK and France [†]

Caterina Franzon ^{1,2,*} , Anestis Dougkas ², Juliet Memery ³ and Katherine M. Appleton ¹ 

¹ Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science and Technology, Bournemouth University, Poole House, Fern Barrow, Poole BH12 5BB, UK; k.appleton@bournemouth.ac.uk

² Institut Lyfe Research Center (Formerly Institut Paul Bocuse Research Center), 1 Chem. de Calabert, 69130 Écully, France; adougkas@institutlyfe.com

³ Department of Marketing, Strategy & Innovation, Bournemouth University Business School, Bournemouth University Fern Barrow, Poole BH12 5BB, UK; jmemery@bournemouth.ac.uk

* Correspondence: cfranzon@bournemouth.ac.uk

[†] Presented at the 14th European Nutrition Conference FENS 2023, Belgrade, Serbia, 14–17 November 2023.

Abstract: Several studies have shown that consuming dairy products may have a positive impact on reducing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and helping maintain gut health, while the production of soft dairy, i.e., milk, yoghurt, and soft cheese, has been linked to lower impacts on the environment than meat. Reports show that, despite its benefits, dairy consumption around the world is lower than recommended, decreasing drastically when young individuals leave school. This study aimed to identify reasons for the consumption of dairy foods among young adults aged 18–30 years old in the UK and France and explore the potential differences and similarities between the two countries. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in the country's language, audio-recorded, and transcribed. Participants were asked about their reasons for consumption of a wide range of products, e.g., milk, fermented dairy, dairy desserts, cheeses, plant-based dairy alternatives. A thematic analysis was performed. The transcripts were coded; themes and sub-themes were generated from codes using an inductive approach. Forty-five young adults (UK = 22) took part in this study; four focus groups and seven individual interviews were conducted in both Bournemouth, UK, and Ecully, France. Four themes (product-related, individual-related, culture, and market offering) and sixteen sub-themes (sensory, non-sensory, composition; mode of consumption, preferences, personal reasons, knowledge, attitudes and concerns, needs or cravings; use, product categorization, social norms; alternative, packaging, value for money, availability) were found to influence participants' dairy consumption in both countries. A seventeenth sub-theme (structure of the meal) was reported only by French participants. The results of this study suggest there are no big differences in reasons for consumption between the UK and France, but due to the limited sample size, further investigations are needed. An online questionnaire was developed from the results of this study and launched in early 2023, aiming to explore reasons, contexts, and modes of consumption of dairy products among a larger sample of young adults in both the UK and France.



Citation: Franzon, C.; Dougkas, A.; Memery, J.; Appleton, K.M. Why Young Adults (18–30 Years Old) Consume Dairy Foods: A Qualitative Study to Explore and Identify Reasons for Dairy Consumption in the UK and France. *Proceedings* **2023**, *91*, 167. <https://doi.org/10.3390/proceedings2023091167>

Academic Editors: Sladjana Sobajic and Philip Calder

Published: 1 February 2024



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Keywords: dairy; reasons for consumption; UK; France; young adults

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, K.M.A. and C.F.; methodology, K.M.A. and C.F.; investigation, C.F.; analysis, C.F. and K.M.A.; writing—original draft preparation, C.F.; writing—review and editing, K.M.A., A.D., J.M. and C.F.; supervision, K.M.A., A.D. and J.M.; funding acquisition, K.M.A., A.D. and J.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: Bournemouth University; Institut Lyfe, Research Center (Formerly Institut Paul Bocuse, Research Center); Danone S.A.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted according to the guidelines laid down in the Declaration of Helsinki and all procedures involving human subjects were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Bournemouth University, UK (ID: 43726, date of approval 4 May 2022).

Informed Consent Statement: Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data are available on reasonable request of the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. This work was part funded by Danone S.A. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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