

foodlines

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June 1988: David Kennedy, son of the late Robert F. Kennedy, is arrested by Nutrition Police in his posh New York apartment with 116 pounds of white sugar. He is charged under the Junk food Act of 1987 with possession with intent to sell of an unwholesome substance. The largest haul in history, Kennedy's cache would have been worth more than \$21 million when broken down into lumps for street sale."

■ From Chicago magazine, 1979 by WFMT, Inc.

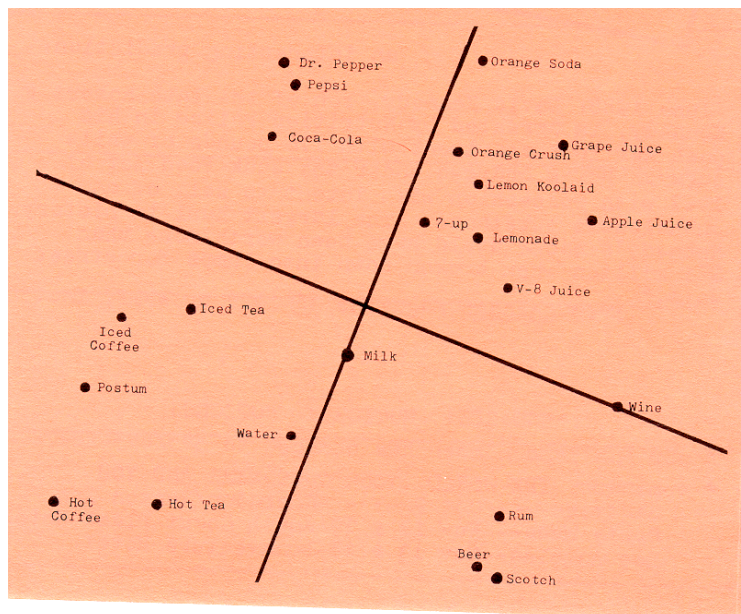
Reading Their Minds . . .

It's not possible to find out what people are thinking by simply asking. They may misunderstand what you are asking or their words may not accurately or adequately represent their thoughts. In fact, just interrupting them to ask their thoughts will change their thoughts – in sometimes surprising ways.

Over the years a number of methods have been developed by experimental psychologists to study people's thoughts without asking them directly. One of these methods involves asking people to compare the items in a group two at a time for similarity. That is, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much is A like B, A like C, B like C and so forth. From information of this kind, researchers can construct perception maps which may reveal a great deal about the person's conscious and subconscious thinking about the group of items and individual items.

Perception of Beverages

When 21 different beverages were tested in the way described above, the partial results are as follows:



There are complicated mathematical ways to determine what this map means, but a lot can be learned by simple inspection. Notice the three cola drinks grouped in the upper left hand corner and rum, beer and scotch in the opposite corner. The other two corners are occupied by brewed beverages and juice-type drinks. Wine falls between juices and alcohols. These groupings tell us something about how people classify and think about beverages.

Positioning

The perception map reveals the position things occupy in people's minds. Notice that 7-Up is well separated from the cola group. Un-cola advertising may have influenced this or may simply be taking advantage of it. In either case, since the public's perception matches the ad campaign, it is right on target. (Orange Crush might benefit from a similar strategy.)

Attributes

The mathematical procedure used to develop the map operates in such a way that the most important property or attribute is represented by the horizontal axis. We see caffeine drinks on the left side and alcoholic drinks on the right. This suggests that the most important attribute of a drink is whether it is stimulating (caffeine), neutral (juices) or relaxing (alcohol and wine). The second most important attribute is sweetness: sugared drinks at the top of the vertical axis and sugarless at the bottom. A third attribute (not shown on this two dimensional map) is healthful vs. not-healthful. Each of these and other attributes can be investigated further by mathematical techniques.

Knowing the principal attributes by which a drink is judged, the position of the drink and its relation to other drinks gives marketers the ability to position and advertise the product effectively.

Other Applications

It is important to recognize perception mapping as a powerful ***tool***. It is a tool for getting inside the customer's mind. Perception maps have been used to study social attitudes, political alignments, food flavors, menu items, store and brand images, manufacturers' relationships to distributors and buyers, etc., etc.

. . . WE'LL BE GLAD TO HELP YOU.