



PARTNERSHIP FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION  
*Educating consumers about safe food handling practices*

# Communications Test of Labeling Icon: Case History

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April 11, 2007



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# Overview



- PFSE engaged BrandAmplitude to investigate consumer response to new 4-quad icon as well as modular versions of each quadrant.

- Research was conducted among primary food shoppers and preparers:
  - In-person focus groups Detroit (2 groups)
  - National online survey (n=1672)
  - Online focus groups (3 groups)
  - In-store interviews Indianapolis (n=24)

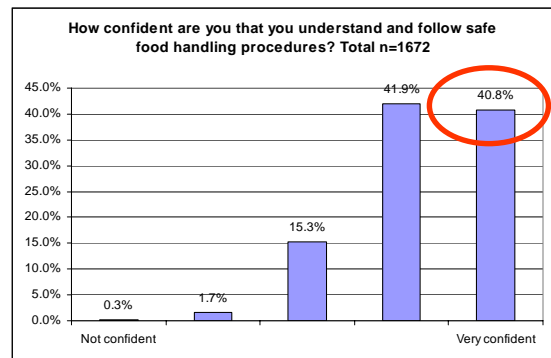
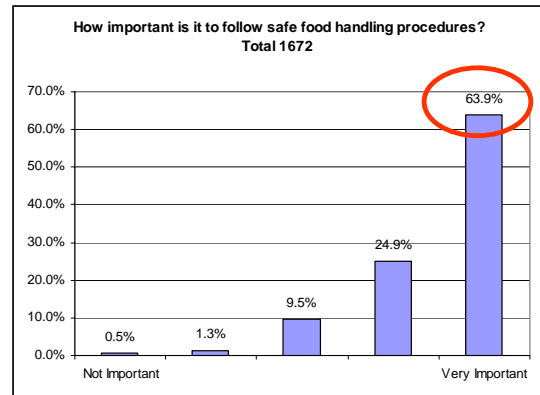


- Consumers correctly interpret the icon to be about the four steps to ensure proper food handling: Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill. There were no identified red flags or confusion.
  - Consumers welcome and appreciate the reminder to always follow safe food handling practices.
- Research indicated that both food manufacturers and food stores will benefit from positive feelings generated by displaying the icon.
  - Consumers believe that display of the icon demonstrates 'responsibility' and 'caring' toward the customer.
  - The PFSE should move forward with its efforts to promote the use of the icon on food packaging and in food stores.

# Highlights



- Most respondents believe food-related illness is a serious threat. 64% say it is 'very important' to understand and follow safe food handling practices.
- 40% of respondents say they are 'very confident' they 'understand and follow safe food handling procedures'. Men and women alike have a strong sense that what they do in the kitchen matters to the health of their family.
- These findings were confirmed qualitatively.
- However, safe food handling practices are not always followed!
  - 58% defrost meat/poultry at room temperature at least 'sometimes'.
  - 57% 'never' or only 'sometimes' use different cutting boards for meats and vegetables.



*"Are you kidding????? my son, daughter, and myself are freaks about that!!!"*

*"I do think about it a lot"*

*"Always, safety first"*

Verbatim  
Quotes

# Icon Communication



## Verbatim Quotes

- The majority of respondents understand the icon to be conveying a general safety message (46%) or a message about proper food handling (26%). 6% specifically played back the idea of '4 steps'.
- When probed for specific messages, respondents correctly interpreted the icon in terms of the four steps of safe food handling.
- There is a strong positive response to the 4-quad icon. It is described as 'colorful', 'effective' and 'an important reminder' of the need to use safe food handling practices. There was nothing disliked, even when probed.

*"The importance of food safety."*

*"Food safety matters."*

*"Remind you of the safety guidelines to follow during food preparation."*

*I think it's a good idea, it gets you to think about safety*

*Nicely presented, eye catching*

*Eye appealing*

*Something that I would pay attention to*

*I like the colors...contemporary*

*It looks great and most people will notice*

*It's simple, basic and eye catching*

*Clear, easy to understand, easy to follow.*

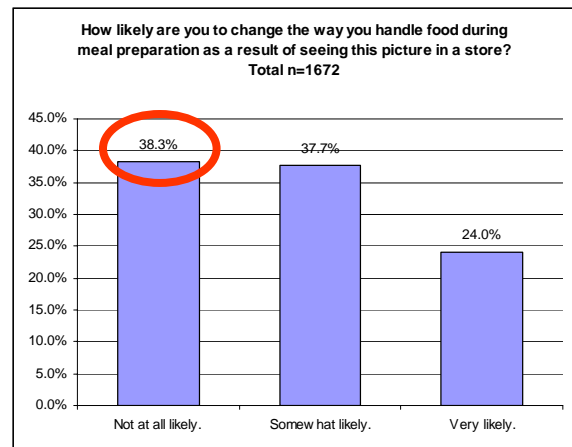
*It reinforces what we know and sometime forget*



# Likely Impact on Behavior



- 24% of respondents indicate they are 'very likely' to change the way they handle food during meal preparation after seeing the 4-quad icon on food products or in food stores. Most say it is a 'good reminder'.
- Specific behavior changes mentioned as 'likely' were properly chilling foods, keeping meats separate from other foods, and washing hands frequently when preparing food.
- Respondents expressed strong interest in learning more about safe food handling practices as a result of seeing the icon. Most said that they would expect to find more information on the web, on food packaging and in food stores.



## Verbatim Quotes

**Does this message suggest any changes in the way YOU personally handle or prepare food? What changes?**

*Sometimes when rushed we can forget these steps.*

*Not really, I know about this, but it is a good reminder because sometime I just forget to do it.*

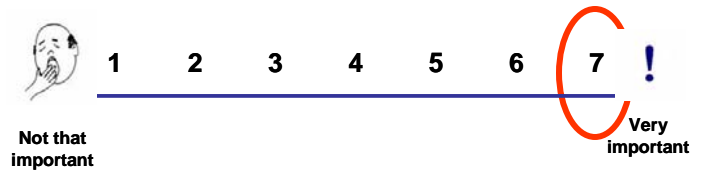
*Not really, because I already follow them religiously and go beyond.*

*No they just reinforce what I already do.*

# Responsibility for Food Safety Education



- Respondents were unanimous in their belief that it is 'important to educate the public on safe food handling practices, rating it a 7 on a 1-7 scale.



Verbatim Quotes

- Food companies and the government are considered most 'responsible for providing information about safe food handling practices'. FDA was the government agency mentioned most frequently. Few mentioned USDA.

## Who should be responsible for providing information on safe food handling?

*"Manufacturers and the government"*

*"Food and drug administration"*

*"FDA and manufacture"*

*"Food manufacturer's, gov, supermarkets, us."*

- Consumers indicated that they would welcome information on a variety of topics, including guidelines for safe food storage and safe cooking temperatures.



# Thank you!



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Please direct questions about this research to:  
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