



## **A Context-Quality Framework for Increasing the Consumption of Soy Food Products: A Comparative Study of Russia and Colombia\***

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### **Abstract**

In order to integrate unfamiliar food products into a given culture the process must take into account the culture it is being introduced into. It is unwise to take a product, blindly introduce it into a culture, and expect it to do well. There are too many unknown cultural factors at work that would complicate the integration. Instead, product integration needs to take into account the specific cultural consumption behavior that is influenced by cultural context and perception of food. To better understand these cultural influences, analysis was done on how an unfamiliar product of soy can be potentially integrated into two different markets, Russia and Colombia. This research develops an exploratory framework for increasing consumption of a commodity taking into consideration cultural context and utilitarian/hedonic food perceptions that can be used as a template for unfamiliar food introductions around the world. The authors then apply the consumer acceptance-oriented framework for increasing soy consumption in the cases of Russia and Colombia. Finally, insights related to distribution, message positioning, and marketing strategy that can be generated by the framework and will be helpful in determining what policy will work best for the integration of soy in the markets are discussed.

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## **A Context-Quality Framework for Increasing the Consumption of Soy Food Products: A Comparative Study of Russia and Colombia**

Food consumption patterns are greatly affected by cultural differences. A food that may sell well in one country is not necessarily going to sell well in another (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997). For example, when Campbell's launched a culturally blind advertising campaign marketing their new ready-to-eat soup product, the product suffered in the English markets whose consumers felt the condensed ready-to-eat soups simply were not at the quality the British expected from their soups (Assael 1992). More generally, since a country's acceptance of a food type depends heavily upon the success or failure of a food to become integrated into that country's cultural food perceptions and consumer patterns, a conscious effort should be made to understand the process by which food is accepted and integrated into a particular country's culture (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997).

To better understand this process, our aim is to create an exploratory cultural framework for increasing the use of unfamiliar food products into different countries and their connected cultures. However, designing research and methodological procedures to examine cultural differences is often a complex and problematic endeavor filled with difficult nuances (Sobal 1998). Realizing this plethora of specific pitfalls inherent in cultural analysis, our study focuses more on generalities that are targeted to provide useful insights into cultural acceptance of unfamiliar food products. In particular, our aim is to study how a country's culture affects their acceptance of unfamiliar foods. To generally understand the cultural influences on food consumption two factors are looked at. The first factor to be looked at is the strength of cultural attitudes and traditions in daily life. Cultures whose cultural traditions and practices strongly affect daily life are "higher context" cultures, while those whose cultural traditions and practices only weakly affect daily life are "lower context". The second factor to be looked at is the cultural perceptions of food consumptions. Cultures who see food exclusively for its end nutritional and health benefits are "utilitarian" cultures, while those cultures who also value the actual process of food consumption are "hedonic" cultures.

To explain this framework, it was necessary to look at examples of countries that highlight the characteristics that make up the exploratory cultural framework. The illustration these examples provide will allow generalizations and insights to be drawn from real world sources. With this in mind, case studies were conducted in Russia (to show a culture with a lower cultural context and a utilitarian view of food) and Columbia (to show a culture with a higher cultural context and a hedonic view of food) to analyze the potential successful integration of an unfamiliar food type: soy. Soy was chosen because of its unfamiliarity to both the Russian and Columbian people and because of the large benefits that can be achieved from the introduction of high protein, low cost soy.

The framework that emerges from both the theoretical discussion and the specific case studies will assist in the understanding of culture. Specifically, the understanding of how to increase food consumption in different countries, a process often thought to be culturally indifferent (Assael 1992), can utilize the cultural context-hedonic/utilitarian food perception framework discussed in this paper to better integrate new food products into different cultures. Through this framework, strategies for increasing acceptance for any unfamiliar food type can be developed. More generally, the understanding of how culture influences behavior can be better expanded to include food consumption. Aspects of culture such as implicit/explicit meaning in communication and placement of emphasis on individuals or the collective group each helps to facilitate a better understanding of how culture influences behavior.

First the exploratory context-quality framework which looks at cultural context and hedonic/utilitarian views of food will be outlined. Second, that framework will be applied to the case studies of Russia and Columbia to this model. Third, implications will be provided for the research in assisting in future introduction of unfamiliar products. Finally a summary will end the paper.

## Framework for Increasing Acceptance of Unfamiliar Foods Across Cultures

Unlike many standardized products such as the Sony Walkman and Coke whose marketability is constant across cultural boundaries (Levitt 1983), when it comes to food consumption people show unique consumption patterns and preferences. It is for this reason that most multinational food manufacturers employ customized marketing programs to accommodate individual countries and cultures by modifying product features such as taste, brand name, package size and ingredients (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997). Admitting that foods are one of the most highly culture-bound products, our question then becomes how does culture influence one's behavior and attitude toward certain food products? To answer this question, cultures are looked at with respect to having a higher or lower cultural context and with respect to seeing food as having utilitarian or hedonic benefits.

### The Effect of Cultural Context on Food Preference

A person's acceptance of a new food type depends greatly upon a person's culture. If a person feels that a new food (in method of eating, ingredients, cooking instructions) integrates itself well into that person's culture, the food is likely to be accepted. The likelihood of a person feeling a new food product integrates itself well into his or her culture is dependent upon the "context" (higher or lower) of that person's culture. (Mead, 1998) For example, "higher context" cultures, such as those found in China and France, focus heavily on personal relationships and social interaction while "lower context" cultures, such as the United States and Germany, focus on individualism and straight talk (Funakawa, 1997). A more expanded and complete representation of the impact cultural context has on general personal choices can be found in Table 1 (Funakawa 1997; Hall 1976; Mead 1998). It is important to note that the data on the table is only generalized behavior and there are segments of any country that will not fit into these generalizations. As a result, the generalizations are intended for illustration purposes only.

With respect to food choices, the same types of characteristics seen in personal choices are also seen in food choices. Much like higher context cultures favor cultural traditions and practices, higher context cultures favor foods that have a deep cultural significance (Hall, 1976). For example, in the higher cultural context nation of Columbia the traditional Columbian tortilla, the arepa, is favored over foreign imported tortillas. Lower context cultures, as a result of their individualism, do not have this same cultural attachment and tend to prefer foods that are simple and quick to prepare and eat instead. Table 1 summarizes the major characteristics of cultural contextual food choices (Funakawa 1997; Hall 1976; Mead 1998).

Table 1  
Characteristics of Higher and Lower Context Cultures

	Characteristics of Higher Context Cultures	Characteristics of Lower Context Cultures
How Cultural Context Impacts Personal Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Strong preference towards cultural traditions and practices</li> <li>* Desire for many close personal relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and clients</li> <li>* Tendency to use multiple forms of communication at once (e.g. tone of voice, timing, facial expressions, and choice of words)</li> <li>* Focus on meaning that is implicit in relationships and situations</li> <li>* Placement of emphasis on the group (e.g. collectivism)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Strong preference towards individual decisions and preferences</li> <li>* Lack of strong cultural pressure to follow tradition</li> <li>* Tendency to use explicit and straightforward communication (e.g. complete, accurate, and appropriate word choice)</li> <li>* Placement of emphasis on the individual</li> <li>* Willingness to change cultural patterns</li> </ul>

How Cultural Context Impacts Food Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Value placed on traditional food dishes</li> <li>* Considers food presentation and texture to be as important as taste</li> <li>* Preference for complex and involved food dishes</li> <li>* Unwilling to try foreign and not culturally accepted foods</li> <li>* Tendency to favor taste over nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Value placed on functional, nutritional food dishes</li> <li>* Preference for simple, quick food dishes</li> <li>* Willingness to accept new foods and adapt personal eating habits accordingly</li> </ul>
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As mentioned before, culture plays an important role in the process by which people choose which foods they will eat. The cultural context, the characteristics and attitudes of a culture, shapes and molds people’s views about things within that culture – including food. This process may be difficult to analyze and understand, given the larger numbers of distinct countries, but, as can be seen in Table 1, an illustration of the general themes that can be seen in lower context and higher context cultures is possible. For the most part, higher context cultures include those countries in Latin America and Asia. Representing these higher context cultures is the case of the culturally rich and personal interacting Columbian culture. As a result of its higher context, Columbia has a strong emphasis on cultural foods and complex dishes. Lower context cultures include Anglo-Saxon cultures and those in Eastern Europe. Representing this group is Russian culture which is generally a much more individualist culture with a strong emphasis on straightforward communication making it a lower context culture. As a result, Russia deals with more practical food matters and places a great amount of emphasis on individual decision making. These examples highlight the extreme ends of the lower/higher cultural context breakdown.

### Hedonic and Utilitarian Views of Food

All cultures do not consume food for the same reasons. Some cultures view food consumption as a necessary task to stay healthy; others view it as a highly refined and culturally expressive activity (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). The former group of cultures, with their necessity aspect to food consumption, can be generally categorized as utilitarian cultures, while the latter group of cultures, with cultural expression as a central aspect of food consumption, can be categorized as hedonic cultures. Although these categorizations are only generalities, Table 2 outlines the general differences between them (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Furse and Stewart 1986).

Vietnam is an illustrative example. As a result of a number of food shortages and civil strife, food consumption has become focused on providing nutritional and health benefits – making Vietnam a utilitarian culture. As a result, Vietnam sees food as a primarily instrumental and functional instrument that provides value by being a means to an end (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). A hedonic culture, on the other hand, such as Japan, views food as non instrumental, experiential, and affective – food is appreciated for its own sake, without further regard to practical purpose.

Table 2  
Factors that Characterize Utilitarian Perceptions of Food

Characteristics of Utilitarian Perceptions of Food	Characteristics of Hedonic Perceptions of Food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Focus on functional aspects of food</li> <li>* Preference towards simple cultural foods and dishes</li> <li>* Desire for practicality in food consumption</li> <li>* Values the end benefits of eating food (energy, nutrition)</li> <li>* Emphasis on the nutritional value of food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Emphasis on the taste of food</li> <li>* Prominence of cultural eating practices</li> <li>* Desire for complex cultural food dishes</li> <li>* Focus on all aspects of food</li> <li>* Strong desire for elaborate and extravagant foods</li> <li>* Values the cultural practice of eating food as well as the end benefits</li> </ul>

This division between utilitarian and hedonic cultures provides an important distinction when looking at cultural perceptions of food. While the cultural context distinction deals with the context of food, the food consumption perception deals with the purpose of food to a specific culture. Hedonic cultures see food consumption as a deeply cultural experience that its members devote long hours to through complex preparation or patronage of one of the many restaurants in the country. In a hedonic culture like Columbia the cultural traditions play an integral part in determining diet. (Price, et al. 2001) Utilitarian cultures, on the other hand, perceive food consumption as more concerned with nutritional and health benefits. In a utilitarian culture like Russia food is valued solely as a means to an end. (Price, et al. 2001)

## **Applying an Context-Quality Framework: The Case of Russia and Colombia**

The resulting matrix, between lower/higher cultural context and utilitarian/hedonic perception of food, can be used in many different ways within the context of food. It allows for a better understanding of why different countries like different types of food, it allows for the prediction of the size of the market of a new food product, and it allows for us to determine if a new food product will be adopted in a particular country if introduced there. This last application, determining (and influencing) acceptance of a new food product, is the focus of this paper. Specifically, the focus will be on working to increase the acceptance of soy. Soy was chosen for two reasons. First, it is a healthy, inexpensive, and versatile food that if adopted will provide healthy and inexpensive food to people that need it, especially in developing nations. Second, soy is a relatively unique and unknown product in many parts of the world that allows for analysis untainted by past perceptions. In applying this context-quality framework to soy, two countries were chosen to illustrate the differences cultural context and food perception has in the introduction of a new food product. Russia was chosen because of its extreme lower cultural context and utilitarian perception of food and Columbia was chosen because of its extreme higher cultural context and hedonic perception of food. Each country and their culture will be assessed in a case study that follows.

### **Case Study 1: Increasing Soy Consumption in Russia**

The integration of a new food into Russia needs to take into account both the “lower cultural context” and utilitarian cultural perception of food in Russia. In taking both of these into account and merging the characteristics each classification highlights, Russia can be seen as a straightforward country looking at the practical and functional elements of food. Getting Russians to use soy is not so much a question of how to make Russians culturally desire soy, but rather it is a question of how to get soy to be functionally placed (as a cheaper and healthier substitute) into existing foods through soy fortification.

Although many foods can be fortified with soy, some soy-fortified products will be accepted easier than others. Factors like how soy will affect the nutritional value and price of soy-fortified foods are extremely important when making the decision about which products should be fortified first. Soy-fortified meat is by far the best candidate for soy fortification because its nutritional value will go up and price goes down if fortified with soy. Soy flour, however, is a far less likely candidate because the soy fortification not only affects the cost of dough, but also the density and stretchiness, which are crucial for making foods like raviolis and crapes. The result would be a loss of practicality and functionality in dough’s usefulness and versatility. These findings suggest that while some products are immediately ready for soy-fortification, others require a careful integration process.

Table 3 breaks down the use of soy fortification among different foods, summarizes overall demand for the food, and recommends the likelihood and timeframe for societal integration of for soy fortified products. Different variables (volume of food consumed, percentage of soy fortification, public acceptance, etc.) were used to derive these final recommendations for each type of food. Taken into account in these recommendations are different tastes (specially this is true for milk and cheese), as well as unfamiliar cooking performance of goods like soy fortified dough and ground beef for pelmeni. To overcome these different and unfamiliar characteristics of soy fortified foods, all that is required is a public awareness campaign highlighting the benefits of soy. This will

convince consumers in this utilitarian culture to accept the functional and practical aspects of soy (the nutrients and the low cost) through acceptance of soy-fortified products like ground beef, milk, cheese, and dough, as well as foods such as soy oil, butter, and bread. Such a shift should not be difficult because it is done in a “lower context” environment where changes in food preference are much easier to succeed if done in a straightforward and honest way that such a culture expects from those who communicate in it.

**Table 3**  
**Summary of Soy-Fortified Foods**

	Ease of Soy Fortification	Volume Food Consumed/ Year, Mil MT (except eggs)	Potential % of Soy Fortification	Potential Volume of Soy Used. Mil MT	Likelihood of Soy Acceptance	Likelihood of Successful Integration
<b>Staple Foods</b>						
Meat	High	6,000	30%	1,800	High	Excellent
Potatoes (Mashed)	Medium	13,650 <sup>1</sup>	20%	2,730	Medium	Good
Vegetables	Low	11,850	-	-	-	-
Milk (soy)	High	Unknown	100%	-	Low	Fair
Cheese	High	8,587	50%	4,293	Medium	Good
Fruits	-	4,950	-	-	-	-
Eggs	-	31,500	-	-	-	-
Sugar	-	-	-	-	-	-
Butter	Low	945	5%	47	Medium	Good
Soy Oil	High	Unknown	100%	180 <sup>2</sup>	High	Good
Bread (Flour)	High	17,700	13%	2,301	Medium <sup>3</sup>	Good
<b>Ethnic Dishes</b>						
Pelmeni	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meat	High	3,120	30%	936	High	Excellent
Dough	Medium	1,170 <sup>4</sup>	20%	234	Medium <sup>3</sup>	Good
Vareniki Dough	Medium	1,170 <sup>4</sup>	20%	234	Medium <sup>3</sup>	Good
Borsch	Low	2.6	-	-	-	-
Sausages	High	1,950	30%	585	High	Excellent
Kielbasa	High	2,340	30%	702	High	Excellent
Crapes Flour	Medium	1,170 <sup>4</sup>	20%	234	Medium	Good

### Case Study 2: Increasing Soy Consumption in Colombia

Similarly with Russia, the integration of a new food into Columbia needs to take into account their cultural context and cultural perception of food. However, unlike Russia that is a lower context/utilitarian culture, Columbia is a higher context/hedonic culture. Columbia, as a result, can be seen as having deep and rich cultural traditions complete with a desire for complex and extravagant foods. In getting Columbians to accept a new food product, more care needs to be given to their cultural practices than Russia – it is not a simple value, utilitarian sell, but one that requires deliberate integration of new food products into Colombian culture. To integrate soy into Colombian culture, the process begins much the same way as Russia, with soy-fortification – a fairly unobtrusive and easily integrated way to use soy.

In Colombia, soy-fortified meat is the best candidate for soy fortification because it can be done without having to sacrifice any taste or flavor from the foods used to cook with the meat. Specifically, soy-fortified sausages are recommended because not only is some soy fortification currently being done, but also fortifying on a mass scale will not affect the taste or texture of the food – something the hedonic Columbians value. Candidates for fortification like flour are unacceptable because adding soy to these products will change the taste in such a way as to make traditional dishes made with flour (such as the arepa), taste unfamiliar. Only after soy has become

integrated into Columbian culture as accepted as a standard ingredient would Columbian chefs be willing to experiment with other soy products like flour. Since integration of a new food product in a higher context and hedonic culture can only come about as a result of working within the culture, a product that made familiar products unfamiliar would be undesirable.

Table 4 breaks down the use of soy fortification among different foods, summarizes overall demand, and recommends the likelihood and the frame of societal integration of soy fortified products. Different variables (volume of food consumed, percentage of soy fortification, public acceptance, etc.) were used to derive at the final recommendation for each type of food. As seen with Russia, similar potential problems in integrating soy-fortified foods including a unusual taste (especially important in milk and cheese, whose taste changes considerably when soy is added) and unfamiliar characteristics of foods which may pose problems to potential cooks.

**Table 4**  
**Summary of Soy-Fortified Foods**

	Ease of Soy Fortification	Volume Food Consumed/Year, Mil MT	Potential % of Soy Fortification	Potential Volume of Soy Used. Mil MT	Likelihood of Soy Acceptance	Likelihood of Successful Integration
<b>Staple Foods</b>						
Meat	High	342	30%	102	High	Excellent
Potatoes	Low <sup>3</sup>	1,540	-	-	-	-
Vegetables	Low	1,925	-	-	Low	Fair
Milk & Cheese	High	3,850	75%	2,887	Medium	Good
Rice	-	3,850	-	-	-	-
Fruits	-	2,695	-	-	-	-
Beans	-	2,695	-	-	-	-
Oil	High	308	100%	308	Medium	Good
Bread	High	3,657	13%	457 <sup>6</sup>	Medium <sup>7</sup>	Good
<b>Ethnic Dishes</b>						
Bandeja Paisa	High (meat)	200	30%	60	High	Good
Arroz Atollado	High	80.8	30%	24.2	High	Excellent
Sancocho	Low	100.1	30%	30.3	High	Excellent
Beef Stew	Low	250.1	-	-	Low	-
Arepa	High	2,695	13%	350.3	Medium <sup>8</sup>	Good

## Discussion and Implications

If we look at a higher context and hedonic culture such as Columbia we find that their cultural traditions and practice play an important role in dictating the food consumption behavior in that country. In such a case, the use of soy fortification in met products represents the best medium by which to increase soy consumption. Similarly with Russia, soy fortification is the best first step to take in introducing soy into the culture. With a lower context, utilitarian culture soy fortification offers the best way to cheaply and healthily improve the foods Russians eat. Both countries use soy in their sausage production and the conditions are favorable for a successful integration. If another, less popular, product were to be introduced first, like soy flour, the response would probably be negative and it would be detrimental to any further soy introductions. When introducing a novel food product one has to be careful if they wish to introduce future products because people have long memories and they will be considerably less receptive if their first experience was a negative one.

Our question then becomes how can these scenarios be applied to our exploratory framework considering their differences in cultural context and hedonic/utilitarian cultural perception of food? Furthermore, how can this exploratory framework be applied to possible soybean markets in other countries? Given our exploratory framework and the two case studies, we will provide general

suggestions to increase usage of an unfamiliar product in Russia and Colombia, as well as other countries.

Table 5 summarizes suggested programs for increasing soy consumption in Russia and Colombia. In general, these suggestions reflect their cultural communication contexts, information needs and food perception concerns. First of all, for Russian lower context/utilitarian market we suggest more explicit advertising campaign that highlights the functional and practical aspects of soy – specifically its health and costs benefits. Furthermore, the direct advertising should work well within a “lower context” culture easily changed if the benefits and reason to change are present. In advertising the products themselves, care should be taken to position soy foods as simple efficient and practical Russian foods that are normal to consume. Although change will be accepted in the long run if it makes Russian foods more utilitarian, in the short term fortifying soy in already established Russian practical and functional foods (like ground beef) allows producers to get a foothold in the market.

**Table 5**  
**Suggested Programs for Increasing Soy Consumption in Russia and Colombia**

	<b>Russia</b> <b>(“Lower Context” – Utilitarian)</b>	<b>Colombia</b> <b>(“Higher Context” – Hedonic)</b>
<b>Education and Advertising</b>	* Direct consumer product advertising, preferably government driven or authorized personnel	* Indirect consumer product advertising, such as facilitating word-of-mouth effects from opinion leaders
<b>Product Modifications</b>	* Integration of soybeans with traditional Russian foods	* Find variety of soy food menu items that can provide consumers joy of preparation
<b>Message Strategy</b>	* Strong emphasize on the benefits of eating soy (e.g., flexibility, convenience) * Usage of functional, factual quantitative advertising * Positioning of soy foods as ordinary, low price foods	* Strong emphasize on the premium and quality aspects of soy foods * Utilization of indirect advertising campaigns (e.g. publicity, product placement ads) * Usage of implicit, dialogue driven qualitative advertising * Positioning of soy foods as culturally normal, premium foods

Because of the different cultures at work, the Colombian suggestions vary to reflect the higher context/hedonic cultural perception of food. In the Colombian market, we suggest a more indirect advertising campaign, such as word-of-mouth from opinion leaders and general consumer education program – which works in a “higher context” culture where massive social bonds and relationships dictate behavior far more profoundly than central control. However, unlike the Russian approach which argues for the practical benefits of soy, care needs to be taken in the Columbia case to demonstrate that soy is able to be used in traditional Columbian foods (like sausages) in such a way as to maintain the traditional rich taste and texture.

### **General Discussion and Suggestion**

While seemingly overly generalized and complex, the need to approach different cultural contexts and perceptions with different marketing programs should not be ignored. Countries with different cultural contexts accept new food products in different ways and because of different things. Countries with utilitarian or hedonic perceptions of food also have different preferences for possible food products with soy. Given all of these differences in cultural context and hedonic/utilitarian perceptions, it is most important for marketers to coordinate and integrate their marketing programs between product selection/modification, communication programs, and culture.

**Table 6**  
**Suggested Programs for Increasing Soy Consumption**

		Cultural Context	
		Lower Cultural Context	Higher Cultural Context
<b>Cultural Perception</b>  <b>of Food</b>	Hedonic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Emphasis on soy health-premium food benefits in a data driven and quantitative way</li> <li>* Move to differentiate soy foods as healthy-premium foods</li> <li>* Provide accurate, detailed, and complete messages</li> <li>* Use direct consumer product advertising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Emphasize soy as a cultural normal, premium food in an implicit, dialogue driven, and qualitative way</li> <li>* Implement an indirect approach, such as word-of-mouth effects from opinion leaders</li> <li>* Move to differentiate soy foods as premium foods</li> <li>* Use an indirect campaign (e.g., publicity, product placement ads) and facilitate interaction with others</li> <li>* Use general consumer education programs</li> </ul>
	Utilitarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Emphasis on the benefits of eating soy foods (e.g., flexibility, convenience) in a data driven and quantitative way</li> <li>* Move to position soy foods as ordinary, low price foods</li> <li>* Emphasize personalized benefits of eating soy</li> <li>* Provide accurate, detailed, and complete message</li> <li>* Use direct consumer product advertising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Emphasis on the benefits of eating soy foods (e.g., flexibility, convenience) in an implicit, dialogue driven, and qualitative way</li> <li>* Move to position soy foods as ordinary foods, low price foods</li> <li>* Implement an indirect approach, such as word-of-mouth effects from opinion leaders or authorized personnel</li> <li>* Use an indirect campaign (e.g., publicity, product placement ads) and facilitate interaction with others</li> <li>* Use general consumer education programs</li> </ul>

Table 6 summarizes suggested courses of actions according to our exploratory framework based on cultural context and hedonic/utilitarian food perception dimensions. In applying this framework to another country, first an identification of that country's perception of food (as either hedonic or utilitarian) and that country's cultural context (lower or higher) needs to be done. It is important to note that while our study makes generalities about country's cultures, in many cases different cultural groups live in a single country and our framework needs to be applied differently to each cultural group. Regardless, once a cultural group's food perception and cultural context has been identified, a marketing campaign needs to be constructed and executed in line with the suggestions laid out in table 6 for the specific type of culture. For example, for countries with low-context culture and utilitarian perceptions of food, we recommend that marketers emphasize soy health benefits in a data driven and quantitative way, differentiate soy foods as healthy-premium foods, and emphasize personalized benefits of eating soy with a direct consumer product advertising.

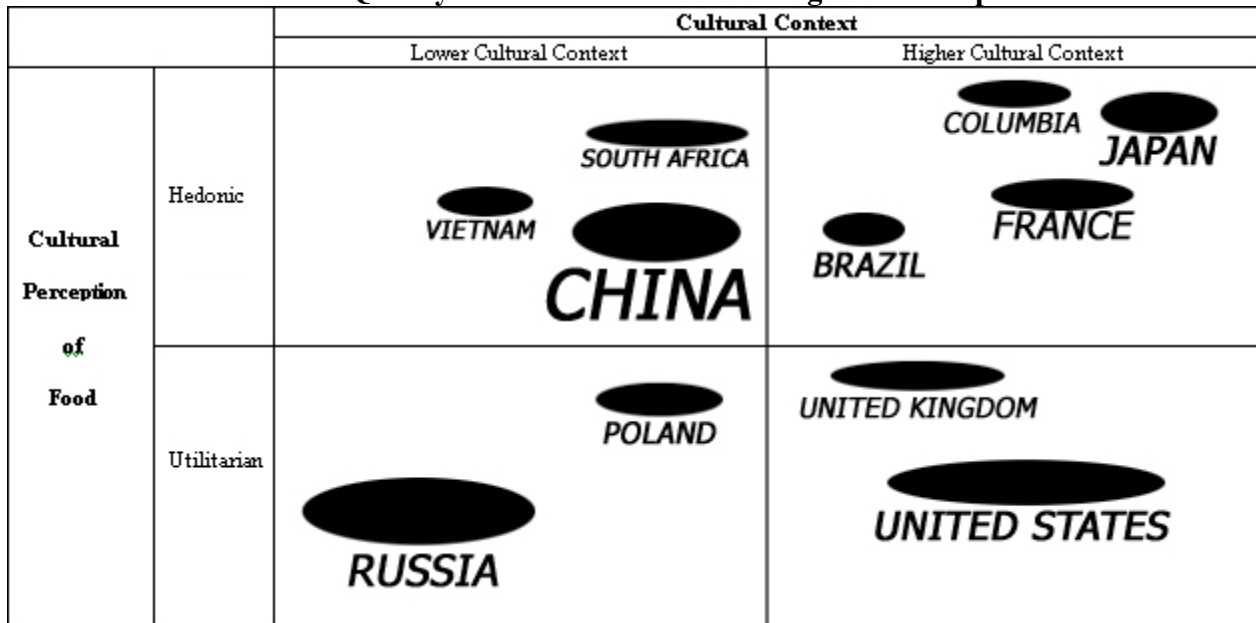
As noted previously, the exploratory framework provided here represents only an average of a population's behavior within a particular culture or country. There are many counter-examples or exceptions to our framework. However, the aim is only to provide better understanding and insights in developing marketing programs for increasing acceptance of soy foods, not to provide absolute and correct measures or framework for cross-cultural generalizations. Therefore, this paper's contribution to marketing practices and theories can only be found in our efforts to combine cultural categorizations with consumers' characteristics and to apply the exploratory framework into real market situations.

Though these scenarios are exploratory there are a lot of universal ideas to be taken away and applied to real-life scenarios. Most centrally is the idea that there is a need to assess cultural behaviors and attitudes when carrying out a market campaign in a particular country. As seen in the two case studies of Russia and Columbia, successful marketing campaigns not only take culture into consideration but also use culture as a starting point for integration of a new food product. In Colombia and Russia soy fortification of meat offered a culturally consistent use of soy that allowed for long-term growth in soy consumption rates. This helped lend credence to other soy products that would follow. That is what a positive experience will do; a negative one might just cut the campaign off at the onset. So trend lightly and carefully when integrating new food products into a culture, for your moves today will affect what the culture accepts tomorrow.

## Leveraging This Framework in Other Contexts

The focus of the paper is the context-quality that has been centered on increasing food consumption in particular countries – namely Columbia and Russia. However, for the purposes of illustration, in Figure 1 the application is expanded by using the context-quality framework to include a large sample of countries. Although empirical evidence could place them more accurately, for now a rough evaluation of their placement is provided. Oval size indicates a rough approximation of the country’s population as compared to others in the sample.

**Figure 1**  
**A Context-Quality Framework for Increasing Food Acceptance**



It is important to recognize that this framework and research has applications other areas than countries. Since many of the insights and analysis focus on broad cultural themes and are not uniquely tied to a country level analysis, the insights can be applied to other areas in which culture has a significant effect on behavior. Specifically, with respect to food consumption, possible focus points could include ethnic divisions, social/economic distinctions, and geographic boundaries – each generating their own cultural influences and behaviors, like countries. For example, an ethnic division study could look at how to increase consumption of Tofu among Jews through the context-quality framework in this paper.

In a more general sense, this research shows us that cultural context and utilitarian/hedonic distinctions in a society greatly affect how members in that society behave. Higher context societies, for example, are more likely to have numerous and complex cultural traditions and practices which translates, in terms of food consumption, into a large number of complex cultural food dishes. This can be applied to other behavior processes, besides food consumption. For example studies on athletic involvement, volunteerism, and even political behavior can all be conducted using the context-quality framework.

## Summary

Culture plays an important role in our understanding of both food and human behavior. That which we do as a result of our cultural influences is just as much a part of the total calculus of our decision making as any other influence, maybe more so. This paper has presented an exploratory, illustrative framework to look at the impact of culture in the specific area of increasing food consumption with respect to cultural context and perception of food and has presented implications from that framework. At this time, it is important to note that the conclusions in this paper are only generalities. There are many counter-examples and exceptions. However, this should not discourage future research in the topic of cultural perceptions of food consumption. Although there are exceptions, as this paper outlined, there are important and applicable insights to be gained from study in this area that can specifically help farmers increase the markets for their soy production or generally help lean insight into how culture influences human behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately 60% of potatoes consumed are mashed potatoes

<sup>2</sup> Potential use 0.1kg/per person/month

<sup>3</sup> Depends on dough physical properties (consistency, stretchiness, etc.)

<sup>4</sup> Approximately 0.2kg flour used/3Xweek/family of 4

<sup>5</sup> Mashed potatoes, which can be fortified with soy, are not widely used in Columbia

<sup>6</sup> Potential use 0.5kg/per person/week

<sup>7</sup> Depends on dough physical properties (consistency, stretchiness, etc.)

<sup>8</sup> Depends on dough physical properties (consistency, stretchiness, etc.)