

MTestJapan.com Advanced Consulting Survey

(Sample)

Project Name: Australian natural honey survey 11Sep2012 v1-1

Customer: Australia Anytime Honey Pty., Ltd.

Sector: Food/supplements/OTC medicines

Audience: Digital + Physical, 1 consultant [Terrie Lloyd]

Explanation: This sample report provides an idea of the level of response that you can expect from a Consultant for an Advanced report. The expectation is that for a standard 20-question report, the Consultant will spend about 90 minutes responding. In that allotted time, not all questions may be answered or answered thoroughly.

- Note that this particular sample is translated, while the original will be in Japanese. We supply reports in Word, so that you can easily cut-and-paste the Japanese response into Google Translate.

If you have additional questions or require clarification on any answers, you will need to request a separate but related project to cover the costs of the additional response. See the Pricing page for more details.

PRESCREENING

1. Food experience. Contractor has experience in foods product planning, import, promotion, and/or sale
 - Yes ✓
 - No
2. Honey/condiments experience. Contractor has experience with importing/selling honey or other condiments products
 - Yes – honey ✓
 - Yes – other condiments
 - No
3. Depth of involvement
 - Planning and developing honey or related products ✓
 - Buyer or importer of honey or related products ✓
 - Merchandizing for honey or related products ✓

- Market research for honey or related products ✓
- Other involvement in hone or related products ✓

MAIN SURVEY QUESTIONS

Note: Each question is expected to take the consultant approximately 4-5 minutes to answer, for a total of not more than 90 minutes. Consultants aim to answer up to 20 questions. Clients requiring a longer survey or more in-depth answers, please check pricing.

Product-related – Physical Assets Assessment:

1. Evaluation of maker's product positioning statement – relevancy and appropriateness in Japanese market
 - *[The positioning statement places AA Honey as being in the natural but not organic segment. The idea being to attract honey aficionados who want quality without paying too high a price. While this works in Australia, where people consume honey for its own sake, in Japan most honey is used as a cooking ingredient, and so the market awareness of honey types is much lower. This is not to say that there isn't a honey market in Japan. The Kiwis have done a good job with Manuka honey, especially those products with high UMF and this is considered the premium tier of product in Japan. Below Manuka table honey (low UMF) are the European honies, then Australian/US/South American product, and at the bottom, Chinese product. The challenge will be to find a niche for Australian natural honey that appeals to the small part of the market that is aware. Our recommendation is to pick a situation that is part of the daily routine of health conscious, financially secure Japanese, and identify the AA Honey closely with that activity. For example, identifying it as being the perfect addition to a morning bowl of yoghurt (which it is!), or as a sweetener for a pick-me-up green ("aojiru") juice.]*
2. Condition of external packaging as received for this survey (attach photo)
 - *[The AA Honey was delivered in packing cartons that are robust and suitable for general transport. Inside those packing cartons were further sub-boxes with no markings, each of which contained 10 bottles of AA Honey. The sub-boxes were also fine, but the polystyrene packing between the outer packing cartons and the inner sub-boxes had disintegrated, creating a fine, electrostatically "sticky" mess of poly beads. Suggest that the maker uses some other form of shock absorption besides polystyrene sheeting. Bubble wrap or eco-packaging would be good.]*
3. Contents container (which holds the contents) packaging physical appearance – quality, materials used, and attractiveness comments

- *[The container used to hold the contents is plastic, squat, and brown, with a bright yellow cap. The bottle on the whole gives the impression of the product being boring and cheap, and it is only the quality cap on top that indicates it might be otherwise. In particular the cap comes with a sophisticated membrane for easy dispensing, and this should have been indicated both on the bottle container and the external packaging, since it's a big plus point.]*
4. Contents container text and directions comments.
 - *[There are no directions on how to dispense the product, although there are notes about keeping it in good condition if it crystallizes. I think that the maker should offer some simple diagrams either on the external packaging or the bottle label, that shows simple usage. Also, there needs to be an Expiry Date on the product. In Japan, honey is considered expired 3 years after import. I did find it weird that part of the label was the correct way up, while the back side of the bottle had the labeling upside down. I realize that this is because the maker intends to have the user store the bottle upside down standing on its cap – to make the honey run down to the opening and always be ready to dispense. BUT, it would be better just to show this on the bottle label.]*
 5. Contents physical qualities – flow, clarity, consistency, color, smell
 - *[There is no doubt this is a great product, I especially liked the Red Stringy Bark variety. Pungent aroma, much more than with Japanese or Chinese (high volume, low-cost) honies, and a big selling point. The product flows well and I saw no evidence of crystallization, although I had been warned this might happen. Crystallization is a natural occurrence, and the Maker has a notice on the bottle label, but it is not easy to notice. I suggest using simple to understand logos and a short list of How to Keep/How to Use on the label. The product was clear and to the standard of Japanese products, but much thicker.]*
 6. Contents taste evaluation – strength, sweetness, compatibility with yoghurt/teas and other foods commonly sweetened, other factors
 - *[I'm sure that if this product was associated with yoghurt, it would become a big hit in Japan. It has a hint of almost "saltiness" to it that you don't normally expect from honey and this will really surprise and delight Japanese consumers – providing you told them of the taste and sensation. Also good in teas, but I would only recommend with stronger flavors, like English Breakfast. Not suitable for delicate brews. If the product was shipped in small bottles, it could be sold as tea sweetener. However, I more strongly recommend that a tearable sachet be developed, and look at selling this with yoghurt from one of the big makers here in Japan.]*
 7. Physical size and weight of product, compared with Japanese consumer expectations

- *[I have the 500gm bottled product. This is larger than other specialist honeys, which typically ship in 250gm jars or 350gm squeeze bottles. However, I don't think the bottle is too big for the market and anyone using it on yoghurt on a daily basis will want it to last anyway.]*
8. Packaging functionality – opening/closing, ability to preserve contents, dispensing ability, functional design values. (Good or negative comments, improvements needed.)
- *[The most noticeable thing about AA Honey is the bottle, which I'm not sure that I like, but it certainly stands out. The bottle is meant to be held by the wedge end, but it wasn't until I'd been using it for several days that I realized this. Maker definitely needs to show how to use this product – especially since the bottle design is a value-added feature! The yellow cap is really well made and opens and closes with a satisfying click. The membrane inside is great at cutting off the flow of honey after you release pressure from squeezing – which means no drips and great convenience for the consumer. This is such a big selling point that it needs to be highlighted both on the bottle label and on the sub-box packaging.]*

Market

9. Special certificates, marks, properties of product and how they will influence Japanese buyers (e.g., organic, FDA certified, no preservatives, etc.)
- *[It would have been best if the product was organic, since that provides consumers with a guarantee that the product is natural. Instead, it is "natural" and not heated – which only knowledgeable people would understand. A nice touch would have been if the Maker included a Japanese-standard QR code, so that consumers could scan the product and see a website on their cell phone. In this way, the value-added points of the product could be highlighted as a means of getting the consumer to buy.]*
10. What do you think of the suggested pricing? (Expensive, cheap, just right, why?)
- *[The suggested price of this product is JPY1,000 for 500gm. This is middle of the honey pricing range and is appropriate as a suggested retail price. I think that stores would like to discount the product by 15%, meaning that the wholesale price margin to the store should be at least 20%-30%. On top of the store margin, you also have the wholeseller margin of 20%, meaning that a JPY1,000 product will have to be landed in Japan for about JPY600. If this is not possible, then we recommend the maximum selling price of this product to be JPY1,500, which is just under the price of the cheapest Manuka table-grade 500grm honeys.]*
11. Would you give this product as a present or sample to a friend? (Why, why not?)

- *[Given the quality of the contents, I would give this product as a sample to a friend. But unless the Maker can make the bottle more attractive, I would hesitate to offer it as a gift.]*
12. Will consumers buy this product online directly from Australia? (Why, why not?)
- *[If a consumer learned how good the product was, by trying out samples here in Japan, I could see them ordering 10 bottle packages at a time internationally and having them shipped to Japan. Since self-importation allows up to 20 bottles of any product, 10 would not be considered excessive. The only caveat would be that 5 kg of honey is quite heavy and the cost of air freighting it to Japan (the only way self-import products are allowed in to Japan) will be expensive.]*

Competition

13. URL for competing product, as sold on Amazon.co.jp and Rakuten.co.jp.
- *[<http://item.rakuten.co.jp/hachibeikan/1045982/> -- Japanese honey store, selling local Acacia honey for JPY3,675 for 2kg – about the same as AA Honey suggested retail price.]*
14. URL for competing product, as sold on Amazon.co.jp and Rakuten.co.jp.
- *[<http://item.rakuten.co.jp/nigari612/nonohana/> -- Japanese Nonohana honey, 300gm for JPY1,690. Note the highly developed jar and labeling – this product would be a good benchmark for AA Honey.]*
15. URL for competing product, as sold on Amazon.co.jp and Rakuten.co.jp.
- *[<http://item.rakuten.co.jp/nk/438060/#438060> – Australian Eucalyptus honey, 300gm for JPY1,050. Product has a good name, but the labeling needs some work.]*

Regulatory

16. What regulations apply to this class of product for Japanese customs?
- *[There are no restrictions on the import of honey from Australia to Japan. There is a requirement, however, to prove that the honey is pure and this requires a test lab report from an approved lab. For example:
http://www.omicfoodsafety.com/html_eng/melbourne.html.]*
17. What steps, if any, are required to meet those regulations?
- *[Testing for food purity and traces of pesticide are the two areas of interest for Japanese Customs and should be performed at an approved lab in Australia.]*
18. Are there any banned ingredients in this product? If so, what?
- *[From the information we received from the Maker, apart from pesticide testing, there appear to be no grounds for concern over any banned ingredients.]*
19. What other regulations apply to this class of product for Japanese health and/or retail standards?

- *[There are not additional requirements to meet local health standards, so long as the product is pure and pesticide-free. It is important, though, that the product is not identified as a Health food, otherwise we have to do some tests to show the effects on health and these are expensive.]*

20. Can this product be legally self-imported by Japanese customers?

- [Yes.]