

4-24-2013

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Recommended Citation

Wright, Lori, "Tired UNH Students Love Their Cup of Joe, Research Study Finds" (2013). *UNH Today*. 4189.
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Tired UNH Students Love Their Cup of Joe, Research Study Finds

Media Relations

April 24, 2013

Tired UNH Students Love Their Cup of Joe, Research Study Finds

DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire students who rely on caffeine to help them stay awake are more likely to turn to a cup of Joe than any other caffeinated beverage, according to a new student-directed marketing study.

Nicole Olsen, a graduating senior in marketing from Bridgewater, Mass., conducted a study for her senior honors thesis that looked at the reasons why college students consume caffeine, where and when they consume it, what types of caffeinated beverages they consume, and how much they consume daily.

“From my findings, I believe that UNH students consume coffee the most because it performs well on the attributes of price, taste, and quality, which were found to be important attributes overall among UNH students. Coffee is also one of the most readily available products on campus,” Olsen said.

Olsen surveyed 251 UNH students who consume caffeine, 74 percent of whom were women. Thirty-three percent of the students were seniors, 25 percent were juniors, 19 percent were sophomores, 13 percent were freshmen, and 10 percent were graduate students. Nearly half the students were enrolled in either the College of Liberal Arts or Paul College.

Coffee was the most popular caffeinated product on campus, with 77.3 percent of UNH caffeine drinkers consuming coffee, 61 percent consuming caffeinated tea, 43.8 percent consuming caffeinated soft drinks, and 31.9 percent consuming energy drinks. More than half of the UNH students surveyed consumed more than one caffeinated product each day.

Of the coffee drinkers on campus, 94 percent purchase coffee at coffee shops. Dunkin’ Donuts at the Memorial Union Building was the most popular place to buy coffee on campus, with 61.9 percent of students purchasing coffee there.

When asked for what purpose they consume caffeine, 82.1 percent of UNH caffeine consumers answered that they consume caffeine to feel more awake. UNH students seem to consume caffeine for mostly school-related purposes, such as for increased energy throughout the day (62.2 percent), to be more alert (60.6 percent), to be more productive (61.8 percent), to stay up late (47.4 percent), and to help with concentration (39.8 percent).

Students said they were most likely to consume caffeine after not getting enough sleep (79.7 percent) and before driving long distances (69.7 percent).

Also, 32 percent of respondents started drinking caffeinated products between the ages of 12 and 16, and the majority of respondents (51 percent) spent less than \$2 on caffeinated products per day.

“From this study, I plan to make recommendations on how stores on campus can effectively market to different segments within the UNH student population, based on different preferences and perceptions of caffeinated products among UNH students,” Olsen said.

After graduation this May, Olsen will start her career as an analyst for a marketing services firm.

“Through my studies, both in-class and independently, I have learned that marketing is driven by data, and that data can give a deeper insight into the minds of consumers if you know how to analyze it effectively. I am very excited to use the knowledge and skills I have gained in the business school in the real world, and I feel that having an understanding of data-driven decision making will be extremely useful for my future in the marketing field,” Olsen.

M. Billur Akdeniz, assistant professor of marketing, served as Olsen’s advisor for her senior honors thesis and the research study. Olsen was one of Akdeniz’s students in her Market Opportunity Analysis course in Fall 2012.

"In the past, the creativity side of marketing was popular, but in today's world marketing is more of a scientific discipline. Marketing research and data analysis are gaining more ground than ever before," Akdeniz said, noting that the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates market research analyst jobs are expected to grow by 41 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average of all occupations.

“That is why we teach rigorous research tools and emphasize the importance of data-driven decision making to our students in marketing to help them get ready for the business world. Nicole's thesis is a great example of a student-driven research project from beginning to end, including several steps such as focus groups, data collection via online survey, data analyses using different methods, and suggestions to businesses and UNH community regarding the caffeine consumption patterns of UNH students," she said.

The UNH Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics offers a full complement of high-quality programs in business, economics, accounting, finance, information systems management, entrepreneurship, marketing, and hospitality management. Programs are offered at the undergraduate, graduate, and executive development levels. The college is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the premier accrediting agency for business schools worldwide.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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