

STUDY REGARDING THE EATING HABITS OF THE CONTEMPORARY CONSUMER

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Abstract: *The worldwide population growth, the extension of urbanization and increasing of incomes has determined the producer and retailers to increase their production and to diversify their assortment offer. Also, in the conditions of saving the time allocated to the daily preparation, the diminution of the physical effort required by this activity, the online sales and the food services have grown significantly in the last years. Employees with high and medium incomes from industrialized countries prefer to serve food at the restaurant at least during the week. People with low incomes and those living in rural areas choose to prepare their own meals at home using ingredients purchased from local markets and supermarkets or grown their own farm. Children and young people between the ages of 16-25 prefer to eat fast food. The general characteristic of the eating habit of all contemporary consumers, regardless of the category of which they are, is the orientation towards safe, varied, healthy and nutritionally balanced foods.*

Key words: *contemporary consumer, eating habits, healthy foods, fast food.*

INTRODUCTION

There is very well known that nutrition is a determining factor in the health of the human body. The food contains micronutrients as vitamins, antioxidants, mineral substances and macronutrients as proteins, fats and fibers, which ensure the optimal growth and functionality of the human body. Also, the eating habits influence the mental and emotional mood of consumers and a diet consisting of a variety of food is often a source of cultural pleasures on life [10,22]. In the Paleolithic human diet was constituted around 30 percents from meat and this is correlated with the development of the human brain [5]. With the development of technology and industry, new opportunities have emerged for people around the world regarding the foodservices segment. These include the establishment of fast food in supermarkets and malls, catering, and meal sales through online orders.

Thus, it is expected that by 2025 there will be an increase of 8% in the number of stores selling food and beverages in most shopping centers, the occupancy rate with such stores reaching up to 20% [9]. In recent years there has been a significant change in the concept of retail, moving from traditional anchor-type stores to those that include dining facilities besides those intended for shopping [16].

The worldwide population growth, urbanization and not least the growing number of middle-class people determined the development and diversification of food services and the producers had to include innovation in their business strategy [16]. Eating habits are influenced by several factors, which are related to age, sex, religion, level of education and culture, income, work environment, residence (rural or urban) and geographical area, health status is one of the most important and acute problems in the world [13,17]. This study presents some approaches of this issues.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to carry out the present study, 30 scientific works and on-line resources from the 50 studied were considered.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The influence of eating habits on the emotional mood of consumers

The eating experience affects the consumers from emotional point of view, inducing a feeling of well-being or displeasure depending on the dishes served. The factors that compete at the emotional mood of consumer can be intrinsic, as the sound (crackling in case of crispy food) or extrinsic, such as the presentation mode (size, color, shape, decorating) or the atmosphere in which the meal is served. All of this aspects determine the quantity consumed, respectively the desire to repeat the dining experience. The awareness of all these elements helps restaurant owners to attract and fidelize the customers and are also suitable for improving the consumption habits of hospitalized people [18,22].

The influence of eating habits on consumers healthy

World Health Organization (WHO) consider that a balanced nutritional diet a primordial condition for people life, health, respectively their physical and mental development and should be considered lifetime starting with fetus development, during childhood, adolescence, youth until old age. Also, a proper diet is vital for human life, professional quality, efficiency and labor productivity and indirectly impact intellectual performance. An improper diet can cause many nutrition-related illnesses. This include obesity, some forms of cancer, stroke, coronary heart disease, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, atherosclerosis, osteoporosis, gall bladder disease, nutritional anemia's and dementia, dental caries [22,20,11]. Nowadays many people approach an unhealthy eating behavior mainly due to lifestyle which no longer allows them to think about what they eat. The globalization has had an impact significant on eat behaviour and determined people to consume junk food rich in calories [25]. This consumer habits increased the incidence of illnesses like obesity, cardiac problems, dehydration, diabetes, mellitus, food poisoning, and arthritis especially in developed country. The nutrition is considered the main goal in prevention and treatment of nutritional deficiencies [25]. A healthy diet and an optimal nutrition involves eating foods low in fat, rich in fiber, vegetables and fruits, moderate amount of sugar and salt, calcium, iron and other minerals rich foods [25].

The geographical area and the eating habits of the consumer

There is well known that each nation has own eating habits and these are manifested daily both at home and in society. There are big differences between European, American, African and Asian food culture and these are related to aspects such as the rules for the drawing of the menus, the use of the ingredients and the presentation of the meal, the dressings and the spices used. Asian food is very colorful and spiced with specific herbs as coriander, basil, ginger, tamarind and the diet is rich in meat and vegetables. In Western Europe and the Mediterranean countries, food is made up mainly of fish and seafood along with many vegetables and fruits cooked minimally. Residents of northern European countries consume much fish, seafood, meat and foods which are high in calories due to low temperatures in this geographic region. American diet consists mainly in junk food and aliments with high caloric levels, ultra-processed, rich in fats and carbohydrates. [15,24]. Regarding the African diet, on average, it is composed by maize, vegetables, milk, potatoes, wheat, chicken meat, bread (brown and white), brick margarine, non-dairy creamer, full-cream milk, green leaves, sugar and tea [27]. According to a Pan-European Survey of Consumer Attitudes to Food, Nutrition and Health from 15 European member states the main five factors which are consider when people choice what to eat are quality in terms of freshness, cost, taste, quality of being healthy and

food preferences of family members. In the USA the factors which determine food choices, in order of preferences, are: taste, price, nutritional quality, convenience and obesity concerns [2,6].

The eating habits of consumers according to age

The diet plays a fundamental role on human healthy starting from birth to old age. Some factors as well as the physiological, psychological and economic ones which feel more and more with age influence food choices especially of adults and older and could be generate barriers to a nutritional balanced diet [7,8].

Young people between the ages the ages of 18–30 are less concerned about healthy eating and prefer semi-processed foods, ready meal that significantly reduce the time for preparation. On the other hand, adults people use to choose foods based on how healthy they are [13]. The young people between 18-30 years have unhealthy eating behaviors, which are associated with the fattening determined among others by excessive alcohol consumption and the lack of sport activity [13,29]. There are studies which reveals that after the transition from adolescence to adulthood, with the establishment of independence, adults becoming increasingly concerned about healthy eating.

Old people tend to have poor nutritional diets related to low variety and few vegetables, meat containing proteins with low biological value, high quantities of sugar and fett. The main reason of this eating behavior is attributed many times to low incomes [30].

The eating habits and religion

Around the world there are some food habits and practices which are based on religion consideration. Thus, during the Ramadam, Muslims do not eat and drink during the day. Also, they do not eat pork. The orthodox Jews and some conservative Jews food habits are determined by dietary laws, which is refers to kosher diet. This it belongs to the Jewish scripture and are described as the using and preparation of animal foods, according to the spiritual health. The Buddhist, Hinduist and Jainist faith allow allows only the consumption of food of vegetable origin due to the doctrine of nonviolence. Eating habits based on religious considerations make people unique whith own identity [12].

The influence of level of education, culture and incomes on eating habits

They are study which shown that the level of education and culture influences the food choice more than income. There is a consensus regarding the distinctions existing between incomes and culture, respectively education in terms of eating habits [28]. It was demonstrated that the people with high level of education consume mainly vegetables, fruits, fish and milk. Also, they use to consume low quantities of alcoholic beverages than people with a low level of education [28].

There are studies that highlight the existence of a close connection at the level of each nation between incomes and a nutritionally balanced diet [28]. From this point of view, it is already agreed that the economic factor has a major impact on food choice. The foods targeted in particular are fish and sea food, fresh fruit and vegetables, due to price variability, which are usually higher than other foods [18].

Eating behavior is a part of human culture and influences in many situation the emotional state, included the pleasure and love and sometimes may be a reason for disapproval or discrimination of another people [25]. In some cultures, foods constitutes social factors and have ceremonial role. There are foods which are considered too expensive, other as being dedicated to be consumed only during the holidays or religious feasts and another are considered as a label of social position [25]. Also, are culture that classified foods as heavy, light, luxury and healty [25].

The influence of environment on eating habits

Today the way in which the environment influence the eating behavior of people and the way in which this affect human health represents a major issue of scientists, government organizations and schools from all over the world. The food habits are influenced by family, social networks and school or work colleagues as parts of social environment; schools, kindergartens, workplaces, food market and restaurants as part of physical environment; social position, incomes, cultural level, food marketing and food policy as part of macro-environment [29].

People choices regarding the eating behavior has a major impact on wellbeing of human body and on ecosystem helthy in the same time. Also, definitely marks the quality of human life todays and in future [29].

There is considered that the abundance of food that dominates the profile market of the modern environment determines the increasing tendency of overconsumption which has the effect of increasing the incidence of obesity in children and adults [20].

Another problems regarding the influence of environment on food consumption is related to the misclassification of these a being "healthy" or "unhealthy," depending on the retail category they are a part of not taking into account their nutritional quality of [20].

The food environment from neighborhood of the residence represents an important factor that affect the eating habits of the consumer [20].

CONCLUSIONS

The eating experience influences the emotional mood of human having intrinsic and extrinsic causes.

A balanced nutritional diet a primordial condition for people life, healt, respectively their physical and mental development. A healthy diet is composed by a large variety of foods and balanced in nutrients.

Each nation has own eating habits which manifests daily both at home and in society.

Young people are less concerned about healthy eating while adults use to choose healthy foods. Old people tend to have poor nutritional diets due the low incomes.

Eating habits based on religious considerations make people unique.

The level of education and culture influences the food choice more than income.

The eating behavior of consumer are influenced by social environment, physical environment and macro-environment.

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