

FOOD CHOICES DURING DINE OUTS BY THE CUSTOMERS

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Abstract

The world economy is more integrated with faster communication and hence forth, diet transition is more inevitable. Globalisation has played an enormous role in the transformation of food consumption pattern of the population. The changes in eating patterns especially with foods eaten outside home have resulted in major changes in the nutrient composition of the diet. Hence the study was undertaken to know the food choices by the customers while dining out at the eateries. A total of 500 customers were selected from the selected food service operations in Coimbatore. A well designed questionnaire comprising the demographic details of customers, name, age, sex, occupation, address, monthly income, food consumption details such as frequency of dining out, preference of food while dining out namely steamed, boiled, grilled, fast, fried or baked foods were elicited. The amount spent per dine out of the customer and types of eatery visited were studied. On the basis of the details elicited education on healthy food choices at eateries were given.

Keywords: food choices, dine outs, trans fats, fast foods

Introduction

Health is the normal and harmonious vibration of the elements and forces that compose the human entity on the physical, mental and moral well being, in conformity with the consecutive principle in nature (Segen, 2015). India is a developing country with diverse population, religion and diets. Over the last decade, economic transition in India has brought-forth vast changes in lifestyle which is primarily reflected in nutritional transition (Priya and Lakshmi, 2012). Eating foods that contain saturated fats raises the level of cholesterol in the blood. High levels of low density lipoprotein cholesterol in the blood increase the risk of heart disease and stroke (Hadi et al., 2012). Replacement of saturated fat by carbohydrate and/or n-6 poly-unsaturated fat may increase cardio-vascular diseases, but it is reduced by substitution with n-3 fats, monounsaturated fat, or low glycaemic index carbohydrates (Astrup et al., 2014). Hydrogenated oil used in Indian cooking are rich in trans fats and have been replaced in many restaurants by refined vegetable oil.

Islam et al., (2012) stated that the changes in eating patterns especially with foods eaten outside home have resulted in

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major changes in the nutrient composition of the diet. These changes in eating pattern are more common not only in urban settings but also occurring in the rural communities as well. The current urban diet is moderate to high in energy, high in fat especially the trans fats and protein, low in complex carbohydrates and fibre, probably low in antioxidants, potassium and trace minerals and high in simple carbohydrates and salt. For many people, eating out is a way to relax and socialise. But if weight is concerned with watching healthy eating, dining out can be a challenge. The good news was that usually there are healthier options at every restaurant, even at fast-food outlet.

Changes in nutritional pattern are thought to be a major contributor to increased rates of non communicable diseases. With mushrooming of food service operations and increased eating out pattern, it will be a mutual benefit to the food service operators through promotion of healthy food choices and thereby ensure quality living of the population. Hence the study was undertaken with the objective to create awareness among consumers about the healthy food choices.

Methodology

A total of 500 customers from the selected food service operations in Coimbatore were identified to elicit food choices among the selected customers by purposive sampling. A purposive sample, also commonly called a judgemental

sample, is one that is selected based on the knowledge of the population and the purpose of the study (Ashley, 2001).

A well designed questionnaire comprising of demographic details of customers, name, age, sex, occupation, address, monthly income, food consumption details such as frequency of dining out, preference of food while dining out namely steamed, boiled, grilled, fast, fried or baked foods were elicited. The amount of money spent per dine out of the customer and types of eatery visited were studied. High income and growing urbanization have also contributed to a shift in the traditional Indian food habit. High income urban dwellers seek variety in their choice of foods and spend more on international cuisine, including fast foods. Consequently, a growing number of domestic fast food outlets, home delivery, take away restaurants and American restaurant chains, such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Domino's Pizza, Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Baskin Robbins have mushroomed out in the last few years (Kishore, 2005).

The food choices among the selected customers revealed that the customers preferred foods that are fat rich and deep fat fried and as they were not aware on the effects of trans fats in fried foods, the study extended education to customers on fats and oils, quantity of fats and oils, different types of fat, trans fat and its ill effects. Awareness was given to the customers using the pamphlet, poster and power point presentation which educated them about

trans fat, usage of fats and oils and ill effects about trans fats in baked foods.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are discussed under the following headings.

Details of occupation of the customers

From the 500 selected customers, 26.6 percent were students with more frequent dine outs since students prefer dine out with their friends and consume more junk and fast foods. Business men were found to have more dine outs with 23.4 percent revealing the nature of work and movement to many places. Nine percent were homemakers and 11 percent were the business men involved in marketing business and private business.

According to Paeratakul, (2003) studies have found that younger adults eat away from home more frequently, although the proportion is lower among children under ten. There is evidence that men eat away from home more than women. The findings on ethnicity are mixed, with one study finding that ethnic minorities eat away from home more often.

Income levels of the consumers

The customers with higher income had more frequent dine outs to the tune of 52.2 percent. More amount of disposable income was spent for the leisure and entertainment. Majority of the customers were with an income above ₹ 10,000 per month.

Food consumption pattern is the most important factor associated with the level of disposable income. It also increases the amount of calories consumed with rising income, but the share of animal products in overall diets also tends to rise. However, the studies with a wide range of countries at various income and consumption levels are not very strong variants and leaves room for additional explanatory factors like culture, religion and possible lifestyle choices (Reusswig *et al.*, 2004).

Type of eatery visited

Table 1 presents the type of eatery visited by the selected customers.

Table 1. Type of Eatery Visited

| N = 500 | | | |
|-------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Eatery visited | Number | Percent | Chi-square |
| Star category | 37 | 7.4 | 94.27** |
| Restaurant | 395 | 79 | |
| Kiosk | 43 | 8.6 | |
| Fast food outlets | 25 | 5 | |

** - Significant at one per cent level

This table reveals that though people visit star category hotels, 79 percent customers were found eating out in local restaurants because of accessibility and mushrooming of restaurants in Coimbatore. Statistical analysis of the data with chi square showed an one percent significance indicating increased number of customers visiting different type of eatery and increased eating out pattern.

Frequency of dining out

Table 2 depicts the frequency of dining out by the selected customers.

Table 2. Frequency of Dining Out

N = 500

| Frequency of dining out | Number | Percent | Chi-Square |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Every day | 29 | 5.8 | 31.475** |
| Thrice a week | 43 | 8.6 | |
| Weekly once | 151 | 30.2 | |
| Once in a month | 244 | 48.8 | |
| Rarely | 33 | 6.6 | |

** - Significant at one per cent level

The details on the frequency of dine out, showed that 5.8 percent of the people dined out daily and they were the students. It is evident from this table though majority of the customer dined out once in a month (48.8 percent) and it is alarming to know that the age group of adolescents and adulthood (30.2 percent) had the habit of eating out once in a week. There was one per cent significance observed in the frequency of dine out indicating more number of customers dining out either weekly once or once in a month.

Preference of foods while dining out

It is found that 30.6 percent of the customers preferred fried foods like fried chicken and potato chips followed by 19.2 percent fast foods like fried rice and chat items and only 2.4 percent preferred raw food preparation such as salads.

This finding correlates with the findings of Siong (2002) which reveals that more families dine out and there was increased consumption of fried foods while dine out.

Amount spent per dine out

Table 3 shows that amount spent per dine out by the selected customers.

Table 3. Amount Spent Per Dine out

N = 500

| Amount in ₹ | Number | Percent | Chi-square |
|---------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Less than 100 | 224 | 44.8 | 36.052** |
| 101-300 | 204 | 40.8 | |
| 301-500 | 50 | 10 | |
| Above 500 | 22 | 4.4 | |

** - Significant at one per cent level

It is observed that 44.8 percent customers spent less than ₹ 100 per dine out for the reason that the consumption at road side eateries and restaurants that provide variety of foods at low cost, followed by 40.8 percent spent from within ₹ 300 per dining out. There was one percent significant level seen in the amount spent per dine out.

Eating out in India is sizzling-hot value, with budget restaurant meals for as little as 40 (even less at the more basic street eateries) and usually from around double that for a satiating mid range restaurant feed. The amount spent per dine out had higher significance at one percent level with increased cost spent per dine out.

Awareness on high fat foods

Table 4 depicts the awareness of the fast food and convenience foods that are high in fat.

Table 4. Awareness on high fat foods

N = 500

| Reasons | Number | Percent | Chi-square |
|--|--------|---------|------------|
| Make the food cook faster | 63 | 12.6 | 26.13** |
| Make the food taste good | 378 | 75.6 | |
| Increase the nutritional value of the food | 35 | 7 | |
| Easier to digest | 24 | 4.8 | |

* - Significant at one level

Details on awareness on high fat foods among the customers revealed that 75.6 percent customers expressed that high fat foods are tasty. This is statistically significant at one percent level proving that there is an increased trend for fast foods among the customers.

The studies revealed that people go out for eating owing to convenience and taste rather than for nutritious and healthy foods.

Conclusion

Food choices during dining out is a vital aspect as the number and frequency of

dineouts is increasing day by day. Therefore consumers must be aware of the nutritional information of the products available at food service operations especially on the consequences of trans fatty acids. The food service operations must ensure education to employees on the ways to reduce trans fats in production and implement alternative strategies. With mushrooming of food service operations and increased eating out pattern, it will be a mutual benefit to the food service operators by providing healthy options and consumers through promotion of healthy food choices; thereby ensure quality living of the population.

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| N = 500 | |
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| Percent | Chi-square |
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| 75.6 | |
| 7 | |
| 4.8 | 26.13** |