Impact of cultural factor on eating habit

Saad Bin Nasir

Department of Business Administration, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

This research gives an account of influence of cultural factors on consumers eating habits. Food carries religious, sexual, political and social connotations. The contents of a consumers grocery cart, table setting, serving rituals, time of consumer meal reveals the consumers political preferences, class, gender, religion and nationality. The objective of this study was to find out the role of demographics and psychographics cultural factors, also to study the transition of consumers taking place from local to foreign food. To explore the reasons of consumers to eating out behavior their taste preferences and changing trends in food consumption. The sample included 150 respondents, which included children and students, businessmen, salaried, housewives. Convenience and purposive sampling was used. The tools used were multiple regression, cross tabs and frequency distribution. They were applied and the data was analyzed and interpreted. The survey revealed the findings that there is a significant relationship between age and income on food preferences, Respondents' in spite of opening up of foreign eateries prefer the food offerings in their local outlets and opening up of new outlets, the greater the capacity of consumers to eat out. Food products offered by the foreign eateries must have a blend of both local and foreign touch to increase their sales in the Local market .A good quality of food plus an entertaining environment by the out must also be provided.

Introduction

This research relates to Pakistani people as it is the: "Influence of Cultural factors on consumers eating habits"

In this research the researcher would be looking at different problems faced by the consumers due to changing taste trends. Why do we face these problems, the relationship between the different variables that cause these problems, how and why cultural factors are the reason that influences our eating habits? Knowing the importance of these factors a need was felt to make a research on the influence the cultural factors on the consumers eating habits. What greater impact these cultural factors are bringing onto our changing trend in the food habits.

People do not necessarily eat what is best for them; culture has a powerful influence. Food carries religious, sexual, political and social connotations. Almost every country in the world has a different culture, and continental differences, which exist, are the highest. For example, food products with pork or alcohol in it are rejected in Pakistan. Due to the religious norms attached to it. Marketers must cater to such consumers accordingly.

Due to immense variety and introduction of various kinds of foods from across cultures is changing the consumers priorities regarding their eating habits, real problem is observed whereas to have an understanding that where consumers are headed in the behavior towards their food habits regarding their cultural factors. The problems include: the recent shift observed by the consumers from their local and traditional foods. The eating habits are also to be observed in the light of health concerns and dietary issues.

Culture is an important factor in food choice decisions, the internationalization of culture may be particularly important. Society has changed considerably and multi-cultural, vegetarian and environmentalist perspectives are now all more common cultural factors in food choice and many different kinds of household have developed. For consumers with tight budget constraints, food choice may be particularly problematic, the complex interaction between poverty, food choice and health are in need of further research.

Statement of the Problem

Culture is an important factor in food choice decisions, culture may present food as mainly the means for the stilling of hunger, or getting nutrition or as the way to psychosomatic health; it may regard eating as a duty or a virtue, or as gustatory pleasure, or as a social or a religious communion.

All these variables such as demographics of consumers, religion, the cultural adaptation in food, and the change in eating trends make major differences in Pakistani consumers eating habits.

To what extent has the demographics affected the taste preferences of consumers eating trends? Gender, Age, Income, Lifestyles.

To what extent the cultural factors account for the differences in the consumer's food habits? Social class, Reference group, Religion

Does Media have a strong impact on varying eating habits of Pakistani consumers?

Does International expansion of fast foods in Pakistan result in an increased adaptation of foreign food locally?

Does the environment of multinational eateries affect the buying behavior of health conscious people?

Objectives of the study

Following are the objectives that are to be achieved through this research study:

Tele: +92-301-7188448
E-mail addresses: saad.goraya@hotmail.co.uk

1). To find out the role of demographics and psychographics cultural factors including family norms, religious beliefs, social status and media on consumers eating habits.

2) To study the transition of consumers taking place from local to foreign food.

3) To explore the reasons of consumers to eating out behavior their taste preferences and changing trends in food consumption.

4) To find out the impact of cultural variables which have significantly affected the influence of Pakistani consumers.

5) To gather relevant information that will help marketers in assessing the influence of cultural factors and the mega environment on consumers eating habits.

Significance of the Study

In studying an individual's reaction to the food he eats, the factors of cultures are always taken in account. What will the consumers appetite be, what will bring a feeling of satiety, what is tasty, depends on the particular culture of the individual in question. The culture decides in what form of food an individual shall consume. A culture tells when to have an appetite for what. The kind of food appropriate to different occasions during the year, to different days of the week, to different hours of the day is culturally patterned also. The cultural influence on food selection may be indirect, representing a value, which pervades all areas of living.

The report focuses on the cultural factors, which is of great importance, is expressed in the symbolic aspect of food. The report covers all the aspects of culture that have a pivotal role in the consumers eating pattern. So this report is significant to all the consumers, marketers, readers such as students and teachers. It will help them to find out the analysis of how the consumers eating habits are influenced. The consumers could easily evaluate the factors of importance in the daily consumption of. As food is an integral part of family celebrations, special days of honor, and festivals and each culture have distinctly different eating practices, food preferences, and food preparation techniques.

This study also signifies to the marketers and will also be helpful for the hotel owners who are already in the field of food items and want to improve their business by having a full research on the variations in the consumers eating habits in the light of cultural factors. The marketers would be aware how much the consumers are willing to spend on the food outlets. How much they dine out is going out observed.

The report will provide an in depth look at the changing eating habits due to the impact of cultural factors. Plus, it will also provide the readers as well as the restaurants and fast food chains owners with some useful solution and recommendations as to how the companies can prosper by adopting strategies that best satisfy customers**.**

Conceptual Framework
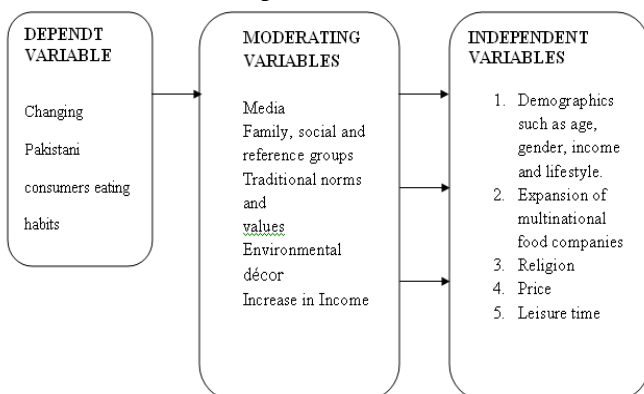
Research Hypothesis

The research is based on six hypothesis mentioned below. They will state whether the independent variables have positive effect on consumer's eating habit or not.

H1 = There is a significant relationship between age on consumer eating habits.

H2 = There is not a significant relationship between Expansion of multinational food

Companies on consumer eating habits.

H3 = There is a significant relationship between Religion on consumer eating habits.

H4 = There is a significant relationship between Price on consumer eating habits.

H5 = There is a significant relationship between leisure time and consumer eating habits.

Methodology

Research type

The type of research being conducted is Qualitative in nature. The variables of consumer's changing eating habits need to be quantified first with the help of questionnaires, as the data are not already available.

Nature of study

Hypothesis Testing: The basic hypothesis's study, the relationship between the influences of cultural factors on consumers eating habits. The basic hypothesis is a co-relational hypothesis. This also accounts for being it a co relational study, which intends to find out what important variables are associated with the problem and their importance.

Descriptive Study: In this perspective it is seen that the researcher has to describe the characteristics of the cultural factors and how much strong influence they have on the consumers eating habits, accounts for the description of certain phenomena's. The description of certain variables account for the study to be of descriptive nature.

Techniques

The statistical technique used for the research. The techniques which are using very useful for forecasting and for research purpose. Microsoft Excel will also be used to put the graphs, frequency tables and charts on Microsoft Word for the analysis later on.

Data analysis

SPSS will be used to run the regression. Frequency and cross tabulations will be used to find the link between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables measured, Also the analysis will be supported by various pie charts and graphs to have a graphical representation of the statistics.

The results generated from SPSS would be compiled and would be analyzed using tables, graphs and results. The results of each hypothesis will be explained in detail showing charts and graphs as well.

Population, Working population and planned sample

The total population includes all the restaurants,hotels food outlets in Pakistan. The questionnaires will be floated among fifty respondents from Faisalabad belonging to different levels; upper as well as lower income group in the public outlets and restaurants.

Results and Analysis

Multiple regression

The output shows the results of fitting a multiple linear regression model to describe the relationship between consumer eating habits and 7 independent variables. The equation of the fitted model is Eating habits= $2.90824 + 0.531066*age$ &

income-0.342563*leisure time -0.27583*type of food outlet+ 0.0990536*religion+ 0.107306*price -0.420985*changing trends + 0.512383*expansion of multi-national\

The R-Squared statistic indicates that the model as fitted explains 56.6770 % of the variability in consumer eating habits. The adjusted R-squared statistic, which is more suitable for comparing models with different numbers of independent variables, is 42.9048 %. The standard error of the estimate shows the standard deviation of the residuals to be 0.645324. This value can be used to construct prediction limits for new observations by selecting the Reports option from the text menu. The mean absolute error (MAE) of 0.432797is the average value of the residuals. The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic tests the residuals to determine if there is any significant correlation based on the order in which they occur in your data file. Since the DW value is greater than 1.4, there is probably not any serious autocorrelation in the residuals.

Changing trends and expansion of multinational food chains do not play an important role.

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	T Statistic	P-Value
CONSTANT (q10)	2.90824	0.93308	3.00964	0.0047
Age	0.531066	0.110638	3.89618	0.0004
Leisure time	-0.342563	0.182811	-1.87386	0.0696
Type of food outlet	-0.27583	0.114421	-2.41065	0.0215
Religion	0.0990536	0.140362	0.691451	0.4940
Price	0.107306	0.129321	0.829766	0.4125
Changing trends	-0.420985	0.123078	-3.42046	0.0016
Expansion in multi-national	0.512383	0.1494	3.36268	0.0019

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Model	15.3163	7	2.18804	5.20	0.0003
Residual	17.6637	42	0.420565		
Total (Corr.)	32.98	49			

R-squared = 56.6770 percent

R-squared (adjusted for d.f.) = 42.9048 percent

Standard Error of Est. = 0.645324

Mean absolute error = 0.432797

Durbin-Watson statistic = 2.66973

This study would help to know about the impact and the role the cultural factors have on consumers eating habits. The changing consumer trends are evaluated keeping in mind the influence the cultural factors have. An in-depth study of the variables of the culture and changing consumer tastes are done. The literature review is presented to support the study. It highlights the important aspects and prepares ground for the study. Consumers food preferences, frequency of eating, where and whom to eat, inclination towards local or foreign outlet is all discussed.

To have a further insight to the debate, of cultural factors on the eating trends a consumer survey was conducted to evaluate the degree of awareness and knowledge; attitudes towards cultural factors have regarding food habits. 150 questionnaires were distributed among consumers. The main objective of the study was to gather relevant information that will help the marketers in assessing the influence of cultural factors and the mega-environment of consumers eating habits. The reasons of food preferences of consumers, their reasons to eat out and changing food trends are all analyzed.

The study is hypothesis based. The data collection methods are primary through questionnaires and interviews and secondary data is through past researches, Internet and reference books.

The main findings are:

o Respondents' in spite of opening up of foreign eateries prefer the food offerings in their local outlets. They prefer maintaining their traditional tastes. Most of consumers have a likeness for traditional food and try eating at outlets offering the local food items. These people have a little taste towards western outlets.

o A high percentage of people eat out and this is done frequently, usually on a weekly basis. Opening up of new outlets, the greater the capacity of consumers to eat out, they usually go with their families at lunch or dinner times.

o In Pakistan eating out is most high rated source of entertainment for the consumers. Whatever may be the reason anniversary; promotions, birthdays or together people in our country celebrate by eating out. Their concept of entertainment is not without food.

o Teenagers however, prefer eating out at outlets like Pizza Hut and KFC. They are very much satisfied with the variety offered there.

o Foreign fast foods are offering local tastes so as to increase their customer base. They are adding such items in their menus, which would attract a lot of people with traditional tastes.

o There is a significant relationship between age and income on food preferences.

o There is no significant relationship between gender and the preference of place where consumers eat out.

o There is a significant relationship between how often consumers eat out with respect to income.

o There is a significant relationship between prices and consumer eating habits.

Hence, it was evaluated that the cultural factors such as age, gender, income, and religion strongly effect consumers eating habits. A large proportion of consumers also adopt the changing consumer trends.

Recommendations

o The food outlets that are all the restaurants and hotels must maintain high quality cleanliness. As the consumers nowadays are hygiene conscious and health is there priority. Food items must be provided in a hygiene environment this is what customers are looking for. Pakistanis prefer their traditional foods but in a neat environment. The restaurant management must maintain this standard so as to increase their customer base. Western outlet keep the cleanliness factor in mind and have an edge in this regard as compared to the local eateries.

o As from the survey it was found out that consumers prefer foreign food more when a local taste touch is applied on it. So it is recommended to the restaurant management keeping in mind the variation in consumers eating habits according to the influence of cultural factors that when foreign outlet tends to open in countries like Pakistan that they should have a strong cultural adaptation. Spicier food should be made; a blend of the

local ingredients with the foreign product specialty must be prepared. Although, many teenagers and other age groups are seen going towards foreign outlets, but a greater proportion will be found in foreign outlets when a desi factor is retained in it. Our consumers would enjoy a paratha, if it were filled with cheese and sausages. Such a combination caters to both the food specialties.

o Thirdly, in our society we see that eating out is considered to be a major source of entertainment for the consumers. Consumers are ready to pay big money on food. Keeping this factor in mind it is suggested that the food outlet when opens up must have a comfortable, splendid and unique décor. When a consumer comes out of home with his family on weekends he intends to enjoy that time. When consumers in our society we could see have picked up the option of eating out so they should get full value for their money. So this could be done if the restaurants are decorated with big screens are installed on which some mind relaxing songs are on.

Limitations:

o Limited time frame of six months is a major constraint, as a research so vast requires time.

o As regular students, I had to cover other courses and other projects and assignments as well so I encountered a lot of difficulty in gathering information

o The use of primary data in the research will be a constraint as people are usually reluctant to respond correctly to questionnaire dealing with psychological and environmental questions. Or maybe they do not understand certain questions.

o Though primary data is most reliable but it involves constraint of incorrect information that respondents give in the questionnaire.

Reference:

Blackwood (1997), Marketing Research, ninth Edition
o Gibson (1976), Business review, third Edition
o Hayden (2002), Consumer Marketing, Latest Edition
o Hedden (1996), Restaurants trends, first Edition
o Cowen (1999), Ethnic dining guide, fifth Edition
o Singh (1998), The Trends of consumers, Latest Edition
o Ahmed (2002), Food consumption, Second Edition
o Lynch (1998), Culture and Marketing, fifth Edition
o Balzer (2002), Evolution of Cultural Factors, fourth Edition
o Sviokla (1994), Consumer research study, Latest Edition
o Parsons (1996), Grilling your Culture, Second Edition
o Lasley (1981), Marketing Behavior, Seventh Edition
o Nakomota (1877), Styles in Consumer Research, FirstEdition
o Cant and Bolton (1979), Advertising, Third Edition
o Kotler (2000), Marketing Research, Tenth Edition
o Sverderberg (2002), Qualitative Social Research, Third Edition
o Michael (1991), Consumer's Knowledge towards health food, Ninth Edition
o James (1982), Learning Cultural aspects, Eighth Edition
o Thomas (1985), Journal of Marketing Research
o Smith (1955), Journal of Consumer Research, Latest Edition
o Hai (1979), Restaurants Trends, First Edition
o Varisco (1997), Journey Through Consumer Behavior, Third Edition
o Robinson, 1987, Healthy Eating trends, Second Edition
o Vern and Ravi (1994), International Marketing, Ninth Edition
o Phillip and Graham (1998), Consumer Behavior, Eighth Edition
o William (1981), Food and Culture, Seventh Edtion
o Tuft (2002), American consumers eating habits, www.consumerresearch.org
o Sameuls (1996), Consumer Food Trends, www.vegeterian.co.net
o Davis (2000), Restaurants around the globe, www.vrg.org/links/restaurant.htm
o Khan (1995), Muslims Choice of Food, info@muslimseatinggroup.com
o Jay (1971), Consumers Food Concerns, http://iteslj.org/questions/food.html
o www.google.com
o www.yahoo.com
o www.brint.com/ISJournal.htm
o Nader (1998), Important Cultural Trends, info@culturalvalues.com