

Menu Considerations of the Health Conscious Customers in Selected Restaurants in Tagaytay and Silang, Cavite

Donna Marie Castrodes, Jennica R. Critica, John Michael L. Padila,
Harriet Aubrey M. Rodriguez, and Arthur B. Digman II
Lyceum of the Philippines University-Cavite

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apjarba@lpubatangas.edu.ph

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Abstract – *Healthy eating is becoming increasingly important in consumers' mind. As people realize that health problems are associated with modern lifestyle, interests in healthy eating are escalating. This study was created to ascertain the different considerations of the health conscious customers in choosing their food when dining out in the selected restaurants. The study was designed to determine the awareness of the customers about healthy foods and the main factors that the health conscious customer considers when selecting menu items. The study also focused on the challenges faced by the customers in choosing healthy food as an option and the opportunities in engaging the healthy lifestyle. Descriptive type of research was utilized in the study with 200 customers of the three selected restaurants. The results of this study showed that the age bracket of most of the respondents is from 18 to 22 years old, and mostly were female therefore, female is highly health conscious than male. Respondents are aware what is healthy/organic food and the reason why to purchase. Price is the factor that most respondents considered in selecting food, and the number one challenge for them is to select food that has vitamins and minerals which keep them healthy and gives a good appearance. With the benefits, organic food has more natural antioxidants that improve the immune system which helps fight against diseases.*

Keywords: *menu considerations, health conscious, selected restaurants, Tagaytay, Silang, and Cavite*

INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating is becoming increasingly important in consumers' mind. As people realize that health problems are associated with modern lifestyle, interests in healthy eating are escalating. Some of the trends emerged in the last decade is the growing interest in organic food as well as in local food consumption. These trend shave had an impact on the food service operation. Being known for local produced and organic food can be an important point of differentiation in the market place, giving a competitive advantage to the restaurant.

Despite a recent trend toward healthy eating behaviors, many consumers still tend to over-consume unhealthy foods because of two facts that work in combination. Unhealthy is widely associated with being tasty, and taste is the main driver of food decisions. There is little research on the conflict between healthiness and tastiness [1] Restaurants are not known for health food, but times are changing. Because of an increase in interest in diet and healthy living in recent years, many people that like dining out

have to forego that option because of lack of choices [2].

There are ways to keep the business operating while satisfying customer's needs for healthier fare, but it means scrutinizing the menu and twerking it to include nutritious options.

Everyone needs to eat, and most people enjoy eating in restaurants on occasions, some even on a regular basis. Unfortunately, restaurants (even fire dining establishments) have a reputation for being less than nutritious. This is because customers dine out to eat food that tastes good and it's easier to make food taste good with not so healthy ingredients like fat, sugar, and salt. This makes it extremely difficult for those that care about what they're eating to enjoy a meal out. Healthy eating is a huge food trend right now, adding healthy menu options are now a necessity for most restaurants.

Menu maintains its dominant position in restaurant firms, since it is the core of food and beverage operations. Specifically, menu is an instructor that clearly dictates what will be produced, what type of

equipment and ingredients are needed, and which qualifications employees should have.

The current study examines the relational effects of consumer health consciousness and perception of restaurant menu information on behavioral intentions, perception of food quality, and purchase decisions. Results showed that health consciousness was a significant predictor of behavioral intentions and purchase decisions, and perception of menu information had a positive effect on behavioral intentions and perception of food quality.

Based on the survey done in Japan, most of the respondents viewed that too much of chemical involvement in food production can lead to allergies in children. It was learned that the pesticides and chemical substances in non-organic food could badly affect the health of the young children.

This research was derived from the researchers' own interest in dining and food selections. In the same way, it was noticed that a trend in healthy eating was growing.

METHODS

The descriptive research was utilized to identify the menu considerations of the health conscious customers in the selected restaurants and the challenges it impose in selecting healthy food as an option and the opportunities it brings to their health. The descriptive research design according to Thirumal Azagan [3] it is also known as statistical research where it describes characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. It is a fact finding method with adequate interpretations. It is conducted to assess performance, outcome or impact of a set of variables on another set of variables. This design usually considers an adequate time span to pinpoint the effects accurately. The descriptive survey method focuses on the present and existing conditions. It deals with the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of a chosen population.

The given scale was used to interpret the result of the data gathered: 1.00 - 1.74 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.75 - 2.49 = Disagree (D); 2.50 - 3.24 = Agree (A); 3.25 - 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA)

RESULTS

The respondents of the study were customers from the selected restaurants in Tagaytay and Silang Cavite. The profile of the respondents that was analyzed in the study includes age and gender.

Table 1 shows that the majority of the participants (37%) belongs to 18 to 22 years old age bracket. Thirty two out of two hundred belongs to

23 to 27 years old and 43 and above age bracket (16%). Thirty out of two hundred belongs to 33 to 37 years old age bracket (15%). Twenty-seven (27) out of two hundred belongs to 28 to 32 years old age bracket (13.50%) and only five of them belongs to 38 to 42 years old age bracket or is equivalent to 2.50% of the total sample.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Customers Based on Age

Age	f	%
18-22	74	37.00
23-27	32	16.00
28-32	27	13.50
33-37	30	15.00
38-42	5	2.50
43-Above	32	16.00
Total	200	100.00

David Sprinkler [4] stated "Increased consumer awareness of health and wellness across the age spectrum and among those seeking to combat obesity will continue to fuel interest in functional foods for the foreseeable future, and therefore the ingredients selected for use and potential claims to be made by food processors and marketers"

Table 1 also shows that the majority of the participants (37%) belongs to 18 to 22 years old age bracket because the 2014 Nielsen's Global Health and Wellness Survey canvassed 30,000 consumers in 60 different countries and they found that members of Generation Z (who are under the age of 20) are more concerned about GMO and organic ingredients.

Table 1 shows that 38 to 42 age bracket received the lowest mean because according to an article reviewed by Kerry Torrens 2016, at this time of life many people take their good health for granted and healthy eating and exercise are often put on the back burner. After age of 40, the metabolic rate (the speed at which the body burns calories) drops, but the drop is very modest and the real reason many people in this age bracket start to suffer from middle-aged spread is due to a change in hormone levels and poor dietary choices, combined with lack of exercise.

Table 2 indicates that 93 out of 200 participants are male (46.50%). One hundred seven (107) are females or 53.50 %.

Table 2. Demographic Profile Based on Gender

Gender	f	%
Male	93	46.50
Female	107	53.50
Total	200	100.00

Results showed that female has higher mean than male because according to ASM Shopper Network Study [5], gender matters too. More women than men try to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and they start caring in their late 20s after splurging as young adults. By the time they reach 65, they stop pretending and live life large. In contrast, men practice a “better late than never” course of action. They start watching their diet and lifestyle later than women. More than a quarter of “The Pretenders” men are age 65 or older.

Specifically, females had more favorable attitudes toward both taste and healthfulness of those menu items and greater behavioral intentions than men [6].

Table 3. Mean Response on How the Customers Consider themselves as Health Conscious

I define healthy food as	WM	VI
1. One that doesn't have a large amount of saturated fat, sugar, or artificial ingredients in it.	3.15	A
2. A food that is not too heavy in calories or fat, and contains several nutrients needed to maintain optimal health of the body.	3.27	SA
3. A food that makes my body feels good and does not have any negative impact on my body.	3.30	SA
4. One that is good for me and has vitamin and minerals our bodies need.	3.45	SA
5. High in vitamins and minerals, high in protein, low in sugar and low in calorie count while maintaining greater weight so I can stay full longer.	3.35	SA
6. One that provides nutritional calories in the form of unsaturated fats, some protein low added sugar and minimal preservatives or chemicals that is not nutritive.	3.18	A
Grand Mean	3.29	SA

Participants rated “Strongly Agree” in defining healthy foods. Top definition is one that is good for me and has vitamins and minerals our bodies need (3.45), high in vitamins and minerals, high in protein, low in sugar and low in calorie count while maintaining greater weight so I can stay full longer (3.35), a food that makes my body feel good and does not have any negative impact on my body (3.30), a food that is not too heavy in calories or fat, and contains several nutrients needed to maintain optimal health of the body (3.27). Meanwhile,

the only agree that healthy foods is one that provides nutritional calories in the form of unsaturated fats, some protein, low added sugar and minimal preservatives or chemicals that are not nutritive (3.18), and one that doesn't have a large amount of saturated fat, sugars, or artificial ingredients in it (3.15).

Top definition is one that is good for me and has vitamins and minerals our bodies need (3.45) because Levings [7] mentioned in FDA's New Definition of 'Healthy', when the term "healthy" or any similar term, such as "healthful," "healthier," or "healthiest," is used on food labels, the food must have fewer amounts of certain nutrients to limit, including total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium, and contain at least 10% of certain nutrients to encourage in one labeled serving. The current definition of "healthy" also focuses on foods providing at least a good source of nutrients that historically have been nutrients of public health concern, including vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, protein, and dietary fiber. However, eating patterns have shifted over the years, and potassium and vitamin D have replaced vitamins A and C as nutrients of public health concern.

The statement “one that doesn't have a large amount of saturated fat, sugars, or artificial ingredients in it (3.15)” received the lowest mean and rated “Agree” because the Health Check nutrient criteria were developed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's registered dietitians and were based on recommendations in Canada's Food Guide. The criteria included nutrients Canadians should limit, such as total fat, saturated fat, trans fats, and sodium, and those they are encouraged to consume more of, such as fiber, calcium, vitamins and minerals [8].

Table 4. Mean Response on How the Customers Consider themselves as Health Conscious Remarks:

I purchased healthy/organic products because	WM	VI
1. They are healthier	3.42	SA
2. I can avoid pesticides and other toxins	3.29	SA
3. They are more nutritious	3.41	SA
4. Organic farming is better for the environment	3.40	SA
5. The food taste is better	3.37	SA
6. They are genetically modified free	3.29	SA
7. To help smaller farmers and support rural communities	3.39	SA
Grand Mean	3.37	SA

Table 4 below shows that participants “Strongly Agree” that they purchased healthy/organic food because of the following given factors. Top reason is because they are healthier (3.42), and to avoid

pesticides and toxins as well as they are genetically modified free (3.29). Organic food is defined as food items produced without the use of synthetic materials such as pesticides and growth hormones. This is different from conventionally produced food which involves the use of different chemicals and preservatives [9]. The statement “they are healthier” received the highest mean (3.42) because according to Schuldt and Hannahan [10] revealed organic foods were perceived as healthier than conventional foods, but less tasty.

Kapuge [11] stated his study last 2016 that health consciousness was impacted on the purchase intention of the organic food. Awareness and environment concern have a positive effect on consumption of organic food.

Organic farming production systems are now being recognized because of their low environmental impact and are being certified according to specific regulations and labels in most countries and continents [12].

The statement “I can avoid pesticides and other toxins” received the lowest mean (3.29) because according to Schlossberg 2017, for those who choose to purchase organic goods, the motivation to do so may come from a desire to avoid pesticide residues and food additives, promote planet-friendly practices or all of the above. In terms of pesticides, however, the residue level on most conventionally grown produce does fall within government guidelines for safety.

Table 5. Mean Response on the Considerations of the Customers towards the Restaurants in Selecting Healthy Food Menu in terms of Price

Price	WM	VI
1. It is important that the food I eat is not expensive	3.25	SA
2. It is important that the food I eat is good value for money	3.38	SA
3. It is important that the food I eat is healthy even it is expensive	3.33	SA
Grand Mean	3.32	SA

Price is one factor in considering menu. Participants “Strongly Agree” that it is important that the food is good value for money (3.38), It is important that the food is healthy even it is expensive (3.33), and it is important that the food is not expensive (3.25).

Results showed that “it is important that the food I eat is good value for money” has the highest mean (3.38) because there is a large body of literature on consumers’ attitudes towards organic food products and numerous empirical studies have focused on determining the premium price consumers are willing

to pay for organic products and the factors explaining this premium [13].

According to Rebecca Reczek, [14] we tend to rely on price as an indicator of its healthfulness. This may be in part because the notion that healthy foods are always more expensive appears to be widespread.

Meanwhile, “it is important that the food is not expensive” has the lowest mean (3.25) because the marketplace and the media appear to have taught most U.S. consumers to expect foods with special health properties to command a premium price. While this is the case in some instances (for example, the USDA notes a price premium for many organic foods), in other cases a general positive relationship between price and healthiness may not exist [15].

Table 6. Mean Response on the Considerations of the Customers towards the Restaurants in Selecting Healthy Food Menu in terms of Food Selection

Food Selection	WM	VI
1. The health benefits of rice foods like brown rice or rice cereal	3.19	Agree
2. The potential health risks posed by preservatives	3.22	Agree
3. The health benefits of protein and healthy fats in seafood	3.19	Agree
4. The health benefits of red meat and its potential to be linked to cancer	3.16	Agree
Grand Mean	3.19	Agree

As shown in Table 6, the overall mean of 3.19 indicates that participants “Agree” to consider the five given statements under food selection. Results showed that “the potential health risks posed by preservatives in food” has the highest mean (3.22) because according to WHO [16], preservatives help control contamination that can cause foodborne illness, including life-threatening botulism.

The statement “the health benefits of red meat and its potential to be linked to cancer” has the lowest mean and rated “Agree” because Meat may affect cancer risk because of chemicals formed during digestion that have been found to damage the cells that line the bowel.

Other likely factors include the fat content, and the way it is processed or cooked; or because big meat eaters miss out on other protective foods such as fruit and vegetables or wholegrain cereals [17]. Eating processed meat like hot dogs, ham and bacon raises the risk of colon cancer and that consuming other red meats “probably” raises the risk as well. But the

increase in risk is so slight that experts said most people should not be overly worried about it [16].

Table 7 below showed that “the sweetness of the dish affects my food preference” has the highest mean because it is well recognized that excessive sugar consumption is associated with dental caries and obesity [18]. However, additional adverse effects have recently emerged [19]. While the Institute of Medicine recommends that up to 25% of total calories can safely come from added sugars (sugars that are not naturally occurring in a food), Yang et al. showed that cardiovascular disease risk increases exponentially as the percentage of total calories coming from sugar increases [19]. Additionally, studies have shown that added sugars can increase risk for high blood pressure and high triglycerides, even in children [20][21].

Table 7. Mean Response on the Considerations of the Customers towards the Restaurants in Selecting Healthy Food Menu in terms of Taste or Quality

Taste/Quality	WM	VI
The saltiness of the dish affects my food preference	3.15	A
The sweetness of the dish affects my food preference	3.21	A
The spiciness of the dish affects my food preference	3.18	A
The bitterness of the dish affects my food preference	3.20	A
The sourness of the dish affects my food preference	3.18	A
Grand Mean	3.18	A

Recently, the World Health Organization [16] released draft sugar guidelines recommending that added sugars (including all monosaccharides [such as glucose, fructose] and disaccharides [such as sucrose or table sugar] that are added to food by the manufacturer, the cook or the consumer, as well as sugars that are naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit concentrates) [16] should contribute less than 10% of total energy intake per day.

Furthermore, they recommended that intakes totaling less than 5% of total energy may have additional benefits [16]. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada also recommends that an individual's total intake of added sugars should not exceed 10% of total calories, and ideally should be less than 5% [22]. Thirty- three percent of added sugars are consumed outside- the home [23]. While restaurant foods have been shown to have a poor nutritional quality [24].

Meanwhile, “the saltiness of the dish affects my food preference” has the lowest mean (3.15) and rated “Agree” because salt can be a tricky ingredient to work with. If you use too little your food may taste bland and unfocused, while too much salt quickly leaves a dish inedible or at least unpleasant to the palate [25].

Table 8. Considerations of the Customers towards the Restaurants in Selecting Healthy Food Menu in terms of Flexibility

Flexibility	WM	VI
1. It is important for me that my diet is high in fiber	3.21	A
2. It is important for me that my diet is low in fat	3.22	A
3. It is important for me that my diet is low in calories	3.22	A
4. The healthiness of food has little impact on my food choice	3.16	A
Grand Mean	3.20	A

Results showed that the respondents agreed that it is important for them that their diet is low in fat and low in calories (3.22) because according to Bethany Fong [26], a low-fat diet supports a steady weight and can prevent weight gain because it is lower in calories than a high-fat diet.

Meanwhile, “the healthiness of food has little impact on my food choice” has the lowest mean (3.16). Flavor, aroma, appearance and texture all work together to impact what you choose for your daily meals and snacks.

Table 9. Challenges in Customers in Selecting Healthy Food Option

Challenges	WM	VI
1. Organic foods are supreme products consumed only by rich people. (Income)	2.71	A
2. I compare prices before buying food products. (Cost)	3.10	A
3. I eat what I like and I do not worry about healthiness of food. (Meal patterns)	2.91	A
4. It is important that the food I eat keeps me awake /alert, helps me to relax, cheers me up and make me feel good. (Mood)	3.24	A
5. It is important that the food I eat contains vitamins and minerals, keeps me healthy, and good for my appearance (skin/teeth/hair/nails etc.)	3.25	SA
6. The food takes too much time to prepare. (Convenience)	3.11	A
7. It is important that the food I eat is always available (Availability)	3.18	A

Table 9 showed that “it is important that the food I eat contains vitamins and minerals, keeps me healthy, and good for my appearance (skin/teeth/hair/nails etc.)” received the highest mean (3.25). According to Porcia, [27] for many years, dermatologists did not understand how our diets affect our skin. However, new evidence is mounting that there is a connection between what they eat and how their skin looks. During the summer months, many people suffer from worsening of acne, dry, irritated skin, or sun damage. Eating the right foods may help improve your skin's appearance. They do know that some foods make our skin look radiant while others age us and cause skin breakouts.

Meanwhile “organic foods are supreme products consumed only by rich people” has the lowest mean (2.71) and rated “Agree” because income inequalities are also a major factor in explaining food disparity, determining differences in food availability, access and consumption. Several studies have shown that individuals with favorable socioeconomic status enjoyed in their neighborhoods higher access of healthy foods [28].

Table 10. Opportunities in Customers in Selecting Healthy Food Option

Opportunities in customers in selecting healthy food option	WM	VI
1. Reduce the risk of obesity/weight control	3.19	A
2. Healthy eating improves the blood flow to the brain helping it to stay fit and sharp	3.23	A
3. Maintain energy level throughout the day	3.33	SA
4. Fosters a healthy mind and body, keeping stress at manageable levels	3.33	SA
5. Foods which have high water content keep the skin moisturized and hydrated.	3.31	SA
6. Helps save money	3.33	SA
7. Improves the immune system which helps fight against diseases	3.34	SA

Table 10 showed that “improves the immune system which helps fight against diseases” received the highest mean (3.34) because according to Richards [29], eating the right foods and getting the proper nutrition are the keys to a healthy immune system. Vitamins E and C, probiotics, beta- glucans, catechins, and soluble fiber all help build up immune cells that help boost the immune system.

Results showed that “reduces the risk of obesity/weight control” has the lowest (3.19) and rated “Agree” because since 1980 rates of obesity have

doubled globally, in 2008 more than 1.4 billion adults aged 20 and over were overweight and 500 million of these were obese [16]. Overweight and obesity are a central public health issue as they are known to increase the risk of morbidity and mortality from diabetes, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disease and some cancers [30].

Brigham [31] cited in his study, healthy food choices also promote weight loss and help maintain a healthy body weight. In contrary to processed foods and sweets which are loaded with calories, healthy foods are typically low in calorie content despite the fact that they are high in essential nutrients. Thus they enable you to obtain all the nutrients you need without interfering with your weight goals. And by losing excess pounds, you will not only approve your appearance but health too as overweight has been associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, heart attack, stroke and even some types of cancer.

CONCLUSION

The age bracket of most of the respondents is from 18 to 22 years old, and mostly were female therefore, female is highly health conscious than male. Respondents are aware what is healthy/organic food and the reason why to purchase. Price is the factor that most respondents considered in selecting food, and the number one challenge for them is to select food that has vitamins and minerals which keep them healthy and gives a good appearance. With the benefits, organic food has more natural antioxidants that improve the immune system which helps fight against diseases.

Since healthy eating are now the concern of most customers, restaurant managers must include more healthy menu options that is low in fat, low in calories, and good value for money. People were concerned in weight gain, they are much particular in low fat and low calorie food items to maintain a fit body at the same time to prevent the possibility to become obese. Since healthy/organic food were knew to be more expensive, a restaurant must ensure that every food items offered meets the expected freshness and reasonable portion size that is worth for the money paid by every customers. In addition, further research should investigate new strategies to increase the awareness of people about organic foods and the factors affecting organic food like environmental benefits and organic farmers. Further research that provides detailed information about vitamins and minerals in contributing a good appearance to the health conscious customers. People nowadays were concerned in many alternative products for cosmetics that will give them a young looking

appearance, detailed information of the natural moisturizing content of organic food as well as its vitamins and mineral content will fuel the demand in selecting healthy food option. Further research on the benefits of organic food aspects of trust building among health conscious costumers and how to improve loyalty towards healthy/organic foods is relevant in improving the immune system which helps fight against diseases. Many factors affects the health of an individual, further research on benefits of organic food will boost the interest of the people to consume healthy foods to prevent any health problems condition.

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