

History of convenience food



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People must eat to live. There is no alternative to the consumption of food other than a slow and agonizing death through starvation, and food security is an important issue in a world where the population is continually increasing. Health lifestyle is mainly based on carefully chosen food. Fast life pace and heavy media explore led to a change in lifestyle in terms that consumers became more aware of the need to live healthy lives and eat healthy foods. Education, proper information, product availability and price, all influence healthy food buying decisions.

Convenience foods are prepared food designed for simplify of consumption. These foods products are prepared food products that can be sold as ready-to-eat dishes; as room-temperature, precooked and frozen products and hot products. Convenience food can include products such as candy, soft drinks, fast food; nuts, fruits, and vegetables; processed meats and cheeses and canned products such as soups and pasta dishes. In term of “ convenience” is here understood to refer to amenity or comfort experienced by the customer. However, this does not only mean the characteristics inherent in the product itself. It includes the convenient purchase of a food products, which easy to prepare, and generally available in small quantities.

Convenience products are primarily food related, even if the term can be broadened to cover other product areas. The increasing importance of convenience at the product level is manifested in the development of selected product brands or ranges. The greater importance of both frozen and chilled products and dried ready products is noteworthy. The second instance covers predominantly fresh ranges which are generally not branded but are strongly influenced by the retailer or other prepared products. The

term convenience products really means products that can be eaten immediately (ready-to-eat) or which can be prepared with minimum effort (ready-to-cook), e. g. ready made products or ingredients and ready meals including deep-frozen products.

In the future, the lines between convenience products, retail formats and services will become increasingly blurred. Consumers are not only purchasing prepared food from retail premises but they are increasingly having such items delivered.

1. 1 History of Convenience Food

Modern convenience food its beginnings in the period after World War II in the United States. Many of these products had their origins in military developed foods designed for storage longevity and simplify of preparation. After the war, many food companies were left with surplus manufacturing facilities. These companies developed new lines of canned and freeze dried foods products that were designed for use in the home. During the 1960s, households prepared most of their own food and consumed it at home. Today, more preparation is being performed by food manufacturers and less at home. Manufacturers have been able to provide consumers with more foods where much of the preparation work has been done outside the home. This development has been facilitated by the use of technological innovations in preservation, packaging, freezing, artificial flavorings and ingredients, and by the use of microwaves. In 1965, non-working women spent more than two hours per day cooking and cleaning up after meals. By 1995, this time had been reduced by more than half. The authors attribute this development to a shift in food preparation from individuals to food

manufacturers. They also argue that this convenience has lowered the cost of time associated with food consumption and increased the quantity and variety of foods consumed.

(Traub & Odland, 1979) identified convenience foods as those that are “ fully or partially prepared foods in which a significant amount of preparation time, culinary skills, or energy inputs have been transferred from the home kitchen to the food processor and distributor. There is one of the major conceptual oppositions used to recommend food in the later twentieth century has been between convenience and care (Warde, 1997). The antinomy particularly impacts upon women insofar as conventions of family organization prescribe that food preparation is a woman’s responsibility and that indeed. Hence, the category “ users of convenience food” is a way of identifying reprobates, people who are somehow failing in their duties.

Convenience food describes a variety of hot or cold foods and dishes that require little or no effort in preparation and consumption style. They may be classified according to the level of preparation necessary that have been search by the scientist. There are different categories of convenience foods such as fresh raw product; is a unprocessed product without any preparation, basic product; is the product requires some preparatory steps before cooking, ready to cook product; is the product that requires no further preparatory steps before cooking, ready to use product; is the product that must be prepared and perhaps warmed up, precooked product; this is often a complete dish or menu and only needs to be warmed up before consumption and table ready product; is the product that can be consumed immediately.

There are advantages and disadvantages of convenience foods. The advantages of convenience foods are quick and easily. The prepared food products more efficient and can save time, Convenience products are always available and ready to use, properly stored and ready-to-use products are bacteriologically safer than fresh goods, the shelf-life is more longer, modern production techniques and preservation methods minimize the nutritional loss of pre-cooked food products. Convenience foods products are already divided into portions and these pre-cooked food products are very useful, especially for the elderly, sick, or handicapped persons, or for people who can spend little time to cooking. The disadvantages of convenience foods are convenience food often contains a lot of fat so that its energy content is also very high, the fat quality may not be good. I usually contain more animal fat and the salt content is also high, ready-to-use products are often very expensive and for people who are allergic or sensitive to certain substances or additives such as artificial preservatives, color additives, taste enhancers, they must study more about the labels.

1. 2 Decission Making

In Western societies the variety of food to choose from is ever increasing (Schwartz, 2004) and people make around 200 food decisions a day (Wansink, 2006). One way to categorize the factors underlying deliberate food choices is to distinguish food-internal aspects from food-external aspects (Furst et al., 1996). Food-internal aspects relate to the properties of the food itself, for example, its taste, nutrient content, or texture. Food external aspects relate to both the physical environment in which the choice takes place and also to individual preferences, attitudes, motives, and

information. Often, the two aspects go hand-in-hand because what ultimately matters is how an individual perceives the food-internal aspects (Aikman & Stephen, 2005; Shepherd, 1989) among the most commonly investigated factors in the food literature are taste or sensory appeal, health-related issues, ethical concerns, convenience, price, and weight control considerations. People have also been shown to seek emotional comfort, mood improvement, familiarity, and novelty when choosing food (Biloukha & Utermohlen, 2000; Candel, 2001; Connors, Bisogni, Sobal, & Devine, 2001; Eertmans, Victoir, Vansant, & Van den Bergh, 2005; Green, Draper, & Dowler, 2003; Jaeger, 2006). For the majority of people, aspects of taste and sensory appeal seem to be the most important factors underlying food choice, followed by concerns about health, weight control, nutritional value, and cost (Rozin & Zellner, 1985; Stafleu, de Graaf, van Staveren & Schroots, 1991).

Concern about food choices that may have adverse effects on health is widespread in the developed world, and is embodied in documents such as Healthy People 2000 (1992) and The Health of the Nation (1992). Food choice is commonly regarded as being affected by factors relating to the product, the person and environment (Steekamp, 1997).

Consumer Food Decision Making Model

(Sources: Adapted from A. Drewnowski, Taste, Genetics, and Food Choice. In Food Selection: From Genes to culture, H. Anderson, J. Blundell, and M. Chive, Eds. (Levallois-Perret, France: Danone Institute), 30. Copyright 2002)

Food decision-making model (Figure 1) explains the factors that influence individual decisions when choosing the food products. The food decision-making processes include an array of simultaneous activities related to acquiring, transforming, and consuming food such as: taste, cost; well-being and convenience.

Food selection is primarily motivated by taste (Stubbs et al., 2000; Anderson, 1995; Birch, 1992). Taste is defined by the sensory properties detectable in foods color, aroma, taste and texture. Cost is the second most important influence on food choice when the consumer wants to consume it (Drewnowski & Popkin, 1997). The wealthier the society, the less disposable income spent on food, and as income increase it will effect on food choices. Physical and spiritual well-being is another food choice consideration for some individuals. Physiological characteristics, including age, gender, and state of health often impact food habits. Convenience is major concern in food purchases in societies (Ebbin, 2002). It creates the contexts for eating at home or eating out and choosing with whom to eat.

For food labeling to impact consumers' health and weight status, consumers must use the information. They must first read the label, understand the information and how to use it, and then make decisions about their food consumption based on the information.

1. 3 Product Labeling

As the public has become more concerned about health issues, including cholesterol and saturated fat intake, health claims have become a significant factor in consumers' choice of food products. " Food labeling is considered

an important food policy issue of the 1990s” (Padberg 1992). The packaging and labeling of a food play an important role in its selection because it is the major source of information for consumers, permitting them to make better choices in the marketplace (McCullough & Best, 1980; Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1998). If the label information is more useful to consumers, society can greatly benefit from a public health perspective. Understanding why consumers abuse food labels is required in designing food labeling regulations, improving public health, and enhancing the profitability of the food industry (Lenahan et al. 1973).

There are three main objective in food labels such as: to ensure adequate and accurate information relative to health, safety, and economic concerns; to protect consumers and industry from deceptive packaging and advertising practices; and to promote fair competition and product marketability. Since 1994 food manufacturers have been required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to include food labels (or Nutrition Facts labels) on product packaging so that consumers have accurate nutritional information about the food they purchase. But food labels are more than just a federal requirement “ once you understand the information they provide, you can use food labels as a guide to planning healthier meals and snacks”. Accurate, easy-to-read, and scientifically valid nutrition and health information on food labels is an essential component of a comprehensive public health strategy to help consumers improve their diets and reduce their risk of diet-related diseases.

Nutritional label plays an important role in providing the relevant nutrition information to consumers. Nutritional labels can simplify the whole concept

of healthy eating. It helps to keep track of the amount of fat and sugar, sodium and fiber, protein and carbohydrates. It also allows consumers to make an informed judgment of a product's overall value (APO, 2002).

Labeling is a subset of packaging. Sellers need to label their products. The label may be a simple tag attached to the product or an elaborately designed graphic that is a part of the package. A label might carry only the brand name or a great deal of information (Kotler, 2001). According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the USA, a label is the primary point of contact between the producer and the purchaser and it's a part of the producer's marketing plan. It is not just a piece of paper written onto the container but should be an expression of a number of important decisions that have been made by the consumers. According to the FDA (1998), a label should clearly and minimally state the name of the product, the net weight, the nutrition facts panel (nutritional label), the name and address of the manufacturer, and the brand name. These food labels have become increasingly complex, particularly as products move from the status of basic commodities to highly processed, value-added products (APO, 2002).

Nutritional labeling is also found to affect the consumer purchase behavior significantly. Some evidence reveals that provision of nutrition information may allow consumers to switch consumption away from 'unhealthy' products in those food categories toward 'healthy' products in food categories more easily (Anderson & Zarkin, 1992). Mandatory nutritional labels are required for all packaged goods and they must contain the information specified, which enumerates what the Act requires. There are 6 applications to packaged foods. First is standardization of serving sizes. This

significant because of information such as fat grams and calories are based on serving sizes. Second is regulation and standardization of word such as light, cholesterol free and low calorie. Third is mandatory labeling of fat content by weight specifying both total fat and saturated fat. Fourth is mandatory labeling of fiber content by weight. Fifth is mandatory labeling of the content of the following as percentages of the United States Recommended Daily allowance (RDA) and the last is limitations on health claims. The statute specifies the permissible representation between foods and disease avoidance. It permits only claims that the foods may or might reduce the risk of disease and precludes statements that suggest a guaranteed reduction of risk.

There are the rules that consumers' must get by reading the food label before they consume it such as; Right to know: This right point of consumers access to full information about all products offered for sale in the market. The information may include the origin of a product and ingredients contains. This right implies that producer is required to provide purchaser with information about product-related information needed in making informed decisions. Right to be heard: This right implies that consumer dissatisfaction with and concern about the consumption and use of products and services should be heard and addressed by the marketer. The right to safety: This right purports to provide consumers with the right to protect themselves against the marketing of products that may be harmful or hazardous to human life and to the environment. The right to Choose: This right implies that consumers should be provided with the opportunity to select their desired food items from amongst a number of alternatives.

Nutrition information on food labels is regarded as a major weapon in encouraging consumers to make healthier choices when shopping for food. Food service operators should have a better knowledge about food safety and hygiene since consumers spend money on a meal and expect that eating the meal should not make them sick. Despite better knowledge, a clear understanding of how and why consumers perceive food safety risk cannot be neglected since the uncertainty of achieving food safety goals may lead to some possible consequent losses for consumers (Yeung & Morris, 2001).

1. 4 Food Hygiene and Safety

Food hygiene and safety was a concern point in the public health education of the 1950s through the 1980s. According to Australia New Zealand Food Authority, “ food is not safe if it would be likely to cause physical harm to a person who might later consume it” (Yeung & Morris, 2001) describe that the analysis of risk relating to food safety can begin with the identification of food hazards. Furthermore, a hazard is defined as “ an event or occurrence associated with an activity or process, which can result in negative consequences and thereby provide a source of risk to a receiving environment or population”.

Food safety awareness is all about time high; new and emerging threats to the food supply are being recognized and consumers are eating more and more meals prepared outside of the home because they do not have time to cook (Frank Yiannas, 2008). Accordingly, retail and foodservice establishments, as well as food producers have a responsibility to ensure that proper food safety and sanitation practices are followed, thereby

safeguarding the health of their customers when they consumed their food products. Food safety can be defined as “ the inverse of food risk, the probability of not suffering some hazard from consuming the food in question” (Henson & Traill, 1993). Hazard is defined as the severity of an adverse impact. Risk is defined as the probability of the hazard occurring (Ritson & Li Wei, 1998). It is argued that consumers are willing, theoretically at least, to trade off cost against safety. “ There is a willingness of individuals to accept a degree of food risk in exchange for other attributes” (Ritson & Li Wei, 1998). Thus safety may not be demanded fully when taste, the appearance of the food or price are favorable.

People have meals every day, either at home or away from home. When people spend their money on meals outside, they expect to have good quality food, cheaper price and also with an acceptable food hygiene level, which eliminates food-borne illness (Henson & Caswell 1999). As food is a primary need for human beings, it should be put into account in terms of nutritional content, pre-requisite of healthy and hygienic food that is safe to consume. According the Head of the National Agency of Drug and Food Control, about 80% of food-borne illnesses that happen are caused by a lack of hygiene in processing the food. Some cases of food-borne illnesses should increase the awareness of people and food service businesses about the importance of food safety and food hygiene practices. Purchaser and producer have an important role to play in preventing food-borne illness. According to World Health Organization report in 2002, food borne disease caused by microbiological hazards is a large and growing public health problem in Europe and worldwide (Clayton et al., 2003). Consumers are not

in the position to accurately assess food risk themselves. However, they rely on the food industry and government to minimize the risk for them.

Delivering safe and clean food to consumers is the responsibility of operators at all levels of the food production chain. Increasingly, the producers are being required to guarantee that their food products are free from chemical residues, growth hormones, diseases and other health risks such as lead.

Marketers have always played an important part in guaranteeing food safety and quality to prevent from any disease (Smith & Riethmuller, 2000).

Food safety risk defined

According to Australia New Zealand Food Authority, “ food is not safe if it would be likely to cause physical harm to a person who might later consume it” (Yeung & Morris, 2001) describe that the analysis of risk relating to food safety can begin with the identification of food hazards. Furthermore, a hazard is defined as “ an event or occurrence associated with an activity or process, which can result in negative consequences and thereby provide a source of risk to a receiving environment or population” (Norton, 2002)

notify that there are three basic types of hazards that can cause food-borne illness, namely: (1) Microbiological hazards caused by bacteria such as Salmonella, Campylobacter coli, Listeria monocytogenes, etc; (2) Chemical hazards associated with the use of chemical additives, processes and controls in the agricultural and food industries such as pesticides, toxic metals, or toxic cleaning products; (3) Physical hazards which can exist when food products may contain particles of glass, metal, plastic, wood, hair, jewellery or dirt. In addition, food-borne disease outbreak is defined as “ two or more related cases of illness caused by consumption of food or drink

containing infectious agents, or a single case of chemical or toxic poisoning if laboratory evidence indicated food to be contaminated by the chemical or toxin”.

In order to create a better food hygiene environment, according to (Morrison et al., 1998), the driving force for change in a commercial world must be the customer who must see hygiene accreditation as a pre-requisite to doing business. It is important that customers are educated, as well as providers. When hygiene is highly demanded, market forces will prevail and hygiene will be supplied. In other words, customer awareness of food hygiene will drive a better hygienic food service business.

According to (Jinap S. et al, 2003) food safety is becoming an important issues in Malaysia due to several events, such as demands from importing countries, outbreaks of food borne illness, increased consumer awareness of food safety issues, changing consumer habits brought about by grater affluence, and increased promotion of food safety awareness by authorities and food industry. Consumers tend to adopt one of four actions in order to reduce perceived risk in a purchase, they are: (1) Stop permanently or temporarily, the purchase of offending product; (2) Reduce the purchase of the offending product; (3) Shift from one product to another similar type of product with less perceived risk; and (4) Continue to purchase and absorb the unresolved risk (Roselius, 1971). Reducing intakes of fat, cholesterol, and sodium, and increasing fiber intake have been reported to help decrease a person’s risk of health problems such as cancer and coronary heart disease. Most food products now carry labels that provide information about saturated fat, cholesterol, fiber, sodium, and other nutrients in a format

designed to help consumers choose a more healthful and nutritious diet.

However, despite a huge amount of information, there is still too little knowledge about healthy food and let alone reasons for why people buy it.

1.5 Health Education

People eat foods for many different reasons. The reason is that we need the calories, nutrients and other substances from the food that we consumed for growth and health. A calorie is a unit of measure of the amount of energy in a food and also how much energy will be transferred to that person.

Although we often refer to the number of calories inside of our food, calories are not a substance present in food and because calories are only a unit of measure, its not qualify as a nutrient. Nutrients are chemical substances present in food that are used by the body. There are six categories of nutrients and each category consists of a number of different substances use by the body to growth and health. The carbohydrate category includes simple sugar, starch and dietary fiber. The protein category includes 20 amino acids, the chemical units that serve as the building blocks for protein. Carbohydrates, proteins and fats supply calories are called ' energy nutrients'. Although each of these three types of nutrients performs a variety of functions, they share the property of being the body's only sources of fuel.

Many of us are interested in eating healthier, but sometimes it is difficult to know what is healthy and what is not healthy. When we talk about healthy, we are talking about nutrition (Robert L. Shewfelt, 2009). Nutritional knowledge imposes a new set of guidelines for purchasing foods for healthy meals. Good nutrition involves getting the proper nutrients without consuming too many calories. Obviously, any food that has a good balance

of nutrients but can cause food poisoning is not very healthy. Thus a food must be safe as well as nutritious to be healthy.

Food and nutrition are crucial for both health and survival. Food and nutrition misinformation can have harmful effects on health, well-being and economic status of people. Food allergy is now recognized as a worldwide problem. Food allergy is defined as an adverse immune response to specific foods, typically proteins (Sicherer & Sampson, 2006). The symptoms may be severe and many reactions can occur within minutes, although it could take many hours to appear (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2009). Food allergy ranges from coetaneous symptoms such as atopic dermatitis, appearing several hours after ingestion of the responsible food to potentially life-threatening symptoms occurring immediately upon ingestion.

Bioavailability of nutrients

The nutrient content of food is not enough to ensure that those nutrients are passed on to the persons consuming them. Not all nutrients are available for human digestion. Although consumed, the form in which they exist may prevent the body from digesting or otherwise utilizing them for normal bodily functions. Bioavailability of nutrients describes the fraction of an ingested nutrient that is available to the human body for utilization in normal physiological processes or for storage. There are some factors that affect the bioavailability of nutrients for human consumption such as; specific form nutrients, amount consumed in a single meal, nutritional health of the consumer, and individual person's genetics. While some nutrients are lost or destroyed through food processing and cooking, the nutrients that remain

have been shown to be more bioavailable to the consumer. Arguments to at least partially cook all foods for better health can be easily defended.

Health consciousness assesses the readiness to undertake health actions (Becker et al. 1977).

Health conscious consumers are aware and concerned about their wellness and are motivated

to improve or maintain their health, and quality of life to prevent ill health by engaging in healthy behaviors and being self-conscious regarding health (Newsom et al. 2005; Kraft & Goodell, 1993; Plank & Gould, 1990; Gould, 1988). Such individuals tend to be aware of and involved with nutrition and choose the food that based on cultural background (Kraft & Goodell, 1993).

1. 6 Social Aspects

It has long been recognized that food availability and cultural factors are dominant in food selection. Cultural influences lead to divergences in the habitual consumption of certain foods and in traditions of preparation, and in certain cases can lead to restrictions such as exclusion of meat and milk from the diet (Lau, Krondl & Coleman, 1984). Food is a focus of social interaction, and the consumption of "prestige" foods may become an index of social status (Sanjur, 1982). The strong symbolic, emotional, and cultural meanings of food come to life in the form of food preferences. They choose foods that based on our cultural background and other learning experiences. Familiar foods and food practices represent security to the aged and provide a link with the past that is a source of comfort. For the institutionalized

elderly as well as those living independently adhering to cultural and traditional food patterns will have a positive effect on their well-being.

Eating practices, in terms of food types and food preparation, presentation and serving, is strongly influenced by culture and religion (Catherine Geissler, 2009). Food appropriate for one occasion or a particular gender or age group, may not be appropriate for others. Food has many important social uses which vary from society to society and over time such as communication; is an invitation to share food or drink in a range of different settings, the existence of clearly defined food rules may play an important role in reinforcing in group identity with considerable importance in the context of religion, and ethics; as food must be eaten everyday it serves as a constant reminder of what we believe. Religious food rules not only enhance the spiritual life of the individual but also enhance allegiance to a community of believers.

The developmental perspective of food culture, suggest how social dynamics are paralleled by trends in food, eating, and nutrition (Sobal, 1999). It is useful in conceptualizing broad trends in cultural food habits that emerge during structural changes in a society. Cultural values, beliefs and practices are usually so ingrained that they are invisible in the day to day life of the individual. Each person lives within his or her culture, unaware of the influences exerted by it on food habits. The study of food habits is not an exact science; further, there are no absolute rights or wrong ways to use food. It is sometimes difficult or not applies value judgments to other peoples' food habits, especially those that are repugnant within the context of one's own culture.

In term of food habits refers to the ways in which human consume food, including produce and stored, how it is prepared, how it is served to whom is produce and how it consumed by someone (Lowenberg, 1970). Food use progresses from eating for existence to eating for self-actualization such as for physical needs for survival; this is the most basic use of food, social needs for security; once the immediate need for food is satisfied future needs can be considered, belongingness; this use to shows that an individual belongs to a group. The need to belong is satisfied by consuming the foods that are eaten by the social group as a whole. These foods represent comfort and happiness for many people, Status; Food can be used to define social position and self-realization; this stage of food use occurs when all previous stages have been achieved to the individual's satisfaction.

The political, economic, and social management of food at the local level is typically directed toward assuring a reliable and affordable source of nourishment. Economists describe the role of supply and demand, the commodity market, price controls and trade deficits on access to food.

1. 7 Economy

The comparatively low level of consumer interest in the protection of their rights in many developing nations may be attributed to the fact that consumers tend to overlook consumer protection issues such as product safety and environmental pollution, for the sake of economic prosperity. Marketers also place economic imperatives before social justice and ensure profit maximization through making products and services available to consumers at an affordable price, while ignoring the negative by-products of innovation.

Rising food prices

Food prices have been rising in recent years but have accelerated in the past year or so. For example the price of rice, which is the staple diet of billions, has more than doubled from a year ago. The soaring food price is eating into the incomes and savings of people around the world. People living in poverty and those with fixed incomes, such as pensioners and welfare recipients are among the most seriously affected by the escalating food prices and high cost of living. The sharp rise in food prices has fueled public protests and fractious demonstrations in many countries.

Sharing the Malaysian experience

The experience of Malaysia is shared here as a case of a country that has built up its capabilities and resources across several sectors. The country is one of the world's largest exporters of semiconductor devices, electrical goods, and information and communication technology products. It is a lead