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Factors Influencing Customer Needs For Healthy Eating Products In Selected Restaurants Of Nairobi City, Kenya

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Abstract:-Background: Previous research findings show that consumer need for healthy eating products was in response to rapid lifestyle changes, increased access to knowledge about health and nutrition as well as cultural and social meanings attached to food. However, there is a dearth of research on factors that influence customer needs for healthy eating products in restaurants in cities.

Objectives: This study sought to establish the factors that prompt restaurant goers to adopt varied healthy eating perspectives.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 296 restaurant heads of department (kitchen, service, public relations and stores/procurement) and 401 customers from 74 healthy eating product restaurants of Nairobi city. Five heads of department (kitchen, service, public relations and stores/procurement) and five customers were sampled from each of the 74 selected healthy eating product restaurants. Data was collected using questionnaires. The collected data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, person correlation, chi-square and regression statistics whereby $P < 0.05$.

Results: The study established that a wide range of factors influence customer needs for healthy eating products. These were the need to lead a healthy lifestyle (78.7%); family culture (10.5%); medical prescriptions (5.5%); media, school or books (5%); while peer, social influence scored 0.3%. Factors that were significant in influencing healthy eating product customers needs were the need to lead a healthy lifestyle ($p=0.000$), family culture (p value = 0.000 and 0.001) and medical prescriptions ($p= 0.001$). The study also yielded a chi-square value of 0.00 and an r significance of 0.000 between factors that influence customer needs for healthy eating products and customer needs for these products.

Key words: customer needs, healthy eating, healthy eating products, restaurants, Nairobi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Studies show that a varied of factors influence customer needs for healthy eating products. Studies also show that eating out has changed from eating for its sake to healthy eating. The objective of this study was to investigate the factors influencing healthy eating product customer needs in selected restaurants in Nairobi City County.

Previously research indicated that emerging eating out trends represent changes which had taken place over the last years from an occasional treat to a regular occurrence. Benalam (2009) argues that people did not just eat out to enjoy but sought healthy benefits from the food that they consumed. This was influenced by lifestyle changes, increased access to knowledge about health and nutrition (Legrand & Sloan, 2006). This change in customer expectations and needs in turn made it more difficult for eating outlets and their employees to satisfy healthy eating product customer needs. Angell and Silver (2008) argue that when restaurant guests are presented with items labeled with and without a healthy choice label, a reasonable number of customers choose the healthy choice menu items (Galliciano, Blomme & Rheede, 2012). A shift from earlier perceptions of eating out was set by the World Health Organization (2009) which from its study findings of 1980 to 2008, estimated that by the year 2015, 700 million adults in the United Kingdom (UK) would be obese.

Africa was not left behind in the consumer need for healthy eating products. This was because of the rise in lifestyle diseases. Statistics reveal that in Africa alone, the estimated number of lifestyle related disease deaths in 2005 was 2,446,000 with a further projection of 28 million deaths in the region over the proceeding 10 years (WHO, 2012). Sample statistics of people suffering from these silent killers in Africa entails cardiovascular disease (10%), cancer (4%), chronic respiratory disease (3%), diabetes (4%), maternal and per natal, nutritional disease (70%) and other chronic diseases (5%) (WHO, 2012).

Galliciano et al., (2012) recommend that restaurants should take the lead in promoting healthy lifestyles. Most restaurants were, however, reported to be unfamiliar with the healthy eating concept. Further, it was reported that restaurants lacked capacity to offer healthy eating products that meet the needs of the healthy eating product market (Hwang & Lorenzen, 2008). This study set out to investigate the factors that influenced the perceived customer needs for healthy eating products.

Claims that enjoyment was the core objective for eating out among people in the past years and that considering nutritional content of food would divert their objective have long been overtaken by time. Benalam (2009) argues that eating out has changed over the years and that currently, most people have increased their frequency of eating out whereby nutritional benefits are their key motivator. Similar views are echoed by other scholars whose findings present a shift towards a preference of healthier and particularly low fat choices (Josiah & Foster, 2009). Angel and Silver (2009) on their part argue that calorie labeling of food influences customers meal selection towards products with a reduced calorie and fat content and that such labels enable guests to eat more fruit and vegetables. Indeed, Detter et al., (2008) aver that food labels influenced restaurant customers to generally select healthier diets than those who did not use them.

Healthywise (2017) identify various factors as influencers on behavior adopted by food users whenever they select meals. These factors were: the food that was available, eating routine, marketing, cultural and social meanings attached to food, emotions, knowledge and timing of meals. Healthywise (2017) report on influences on behavior does not, however, fully apply to healthy eating concept which according to this study is an objective approach to food selection by restaurant goers. Factors such as availability of all types of food around the user, eating routine, marketing and timing of meals may not apply to healthy eating concept perspective. This is because, the approach adopted by this category of food users is quite objective. There are those who select this product category because they would like to control their weight, others is to avoid foods that contain cholesterol while others adopt the healthy eating concept to manage illnesses. Availability of various types of food in the environment may not therefore, similar to marketing, timing of meals and emotions that an individual may have. The above factors which do not apply to healthy eating concept do not also agree with the tenets of the Intergated Behavioural Model theory (IBM) adopted by this study. The IBM theory explains behavior as an outcome of personal intentions influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, personal age versus values and beliefs, habits and environmental constraints. Healthywise (2017) survey factors that apply to healthy eating concept are thus cultural/social meanings attached to food and nutritional knowledge that an individual may have. Apparently, most of the research findings concur that there are factors that influence customer needs for healthy eating products. However, there are disparities in which set of factors influenced customer needs for healthy eating products. This study set out to investigate factors that influenced customer needs for this cadre of products in restaurants in Nairobi City County.

II. SYSTEM MODEL

The study was based on the Intergrated Behavioural Model (IBM) which is an updated version of the Reasoned Action

(RA) and Planned Behaviour (PB) theories. The IBM theory explains behavior as an outcome of personal intentions influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, personal age versus values and beliefs, habits and environmental constraints. This study established that a wide range of factors influence customer needs for healthy eating products. The IBM theory was adopted to assist explain the motives that drive healthy eating product customer product selection at meal time. According to the study, customers select products on offer by identifying and evaluating product characteristics in relation to their individualized needs. The variables of the model are as presented:

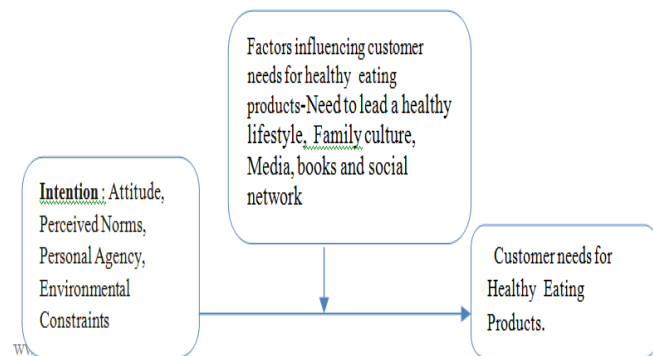


Fig 1.1 Conceptual Model adopted and modified from Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), Intergrated Behavioural Model (IBM) theory.

Intentions (attitude, perceived norms, personal agency and environmental constraints) of customers form the independent variable which are moderated by factors that influenced the intentions. These factors include the need to lead and healthy life, the influence from family culture, media and social network. The result of intentions and factors is the needs that customers seek to fulfill from eating outlets.

III. METHODOLOGY

Design and study site: A cross-sectional survey design was adopted to investigate the factors influencing healthy eating product customer needs in Nairobi City County. Nairobi City is the capital city of Kenya with a day population of 4million. The choice of the location was based on the fact that, in addition to being Kenya's capital city, Nairobi city has high access to information. The residents of Nairobi lead dynamic lifestyle trends and are in touch with current eating out practices hence more informed on food choices and their implications to health. Nairobi City also has higher access to education opportunities which arguably help the residents make more informed food choices. Nairobi city residents are also more likely to adopt western food diets and which expose them to the risk of overweight and obesity hence the need to study the factors behind food choices among healthy eating product customers.

Study population: The study population comprised of restaurant heads of department (N=296) and customers (N=401) drawn from 74 healthy eating products restaurants of the study City. Table.1 shows the sampling criteria adopted by the study. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. Respondents entailed restaurant heads of department (N=296) and customers (N=401) drawn from 74 healthy eating products restaurants of Nairobi City County, Kenya. Nairobi has a total of 317 restaurants out of which 74 restaurants which were included in this study were found to offer healthy eating products.

IV. RESULTS

Findings on Factors that Influence Healthy Eating Product Customer Needs

Various factors influenced the need to sample healthy eating products among the healthy eating product customers. These factors are important because they help in predicting the market in terms of size, market sustainability as well as the likelihood of market growth in the future. Kotler & Keller (2011) argue that factors that influence customer needs reflect the perceived benefits, values and customer satisfaction with a product or a service. Table 4.01 is a presentation of study findings on these factors. The table presents results on the prevalence of each factor in influencing customer needs across the healthy eating product market. Further, all the four factors (healthy lifestyle, family culture, medical prescription and media/school/books) were found significant in growth of the healthy eating product market.

Table 4.01. Factors that Influence healthy eating product customer needs

Factors influencing customer needs N=385	n	%
Healthy lifestyle	303	78.7
Family culture	40	10.5
Medical prescription	21	5.5
Media/school/books	19	5.0
Peer/ social influence	1	0.3

Table 4.02. Customer needs

Customer needs for healthy eating products N=385	(customers) n	% of customers selecting each category
1. Traditional, Medicinal, Foods cooked using healthy cooking methods	206	53.6
2. Non Genetically Modified Products	80	20.7
3. Low fat Foods	30	7.8
4. Organic Foods	25	6.5
5. All categories of HEP	10	2.6
6. Traditional, Organic, Low 7. Sugar Food	9	2.3
8. Traditional, Non Gen Modified, Low salt	6	1.6
9. Low salt foods	4	1.0
10. Traditional, Non Gen. Modified	3	0.8
11. Most of the HEP categories	3	0.8
12. Traditional, Non Gen. Modified, Organic	2	0.5
13. Traditional, Low fat foods	2	0.5
14. None	2	0.5
15. Traditional, Organic Foods	1	0.3
16. Low fat, Organic Food	1	0.3

* Needs for healthy eating products are presented as per customer perceptions

Table 4.03: Factors that influence customer needs versus customer needs for healthy eating products

Factors that influence customer needs for healthy eating products	Customer needs for healthy eating products				
	Traditiona l, medicinal and healthy cooked foods	Traditiona l, organic and low sugar foods	Traditiona l, organic and non-geneticall y modified foods	Low salt food s	All health y eating product categories

Need for a healthy lifestyle	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00	0.00
Family culture	0.000	0.063	0.001	0.0652	0.642
Medical prescriptions	0.682	0.573	0.001	0.740	0.620

Further analysis yielded a chi-square value of 0.000 and an r significance value of 0.00 on factors that influenced healthy eating product customer needs and customer needs for these product category.

V. DISCUSSION

Factors that Influenced customer Needs for Healthy Eating Products

Table 4.01 shows the study findings on factors that influenced customer needs for healthy eating products. The findings show that need to lead a healthy lifestyle (78.7%) at p value =0.000 in all customer needs; family culture (10.5%) significant (p value=0.000 and 0.001) in two customer need categories; medical prescriptions (5.5%) at p=0.001 for traditional, organic and non genetically modified; media, school or books (5%) while peer, social influence scored 0.3% as factors that influenced customer needs for healthy eating products.

Benelam (2006) avers that most people did not just eat out to enjoy but sought healthy benefits from the food they consumed. The study established that indeed, personal concern for a healthy lifestyle (78.7%) was the main factor that informed the healthy eating product customers' choice of food products in the sampled restaurants (table 4.01). It was also a significant factor (p=0.000) in all the categories of customer needs (Table 403). The importance of a healthy lifestyle among customer was evident in what customers wrote in response to factors that influenced their need for these product category. In one restaurant, a healthy eating product customer wrote "interest of living healthy and avoidance of diseases". Yet another customer wrote "to watch my health". Perhaps the findings by the World Health Organization (2009) that by the year 2015, 700 million adults would be obese was an eye opener that sent food users to rethink their eating habits and the impact of their meal choices on their health whenever they dined out. Indeed, Lee and McCleary (2013) agree that restaurant customers' behaviour when selecting meal choices was mostly influenced by health concerns. Healthwise (2017) argues that nutritional knowledge about food was one of the key influencers of people's behavior when selecting food at

meal time. This study considers nutritional knowledge on components of food or nutritive value of food as a factor applied by restaurant customers whose food choices are meant to enable them lead a healthy lifestyle. A Healthy lifestyle according to one customer who wrote "I sample healthy foods to avoid diseases" is guided by customer nutritional knowledge and sometime perception of various attributes of food. These attributes included: low fat foods, low cholesterol foods, low calorie foods, low salt foods, organic foods and vegetarian foods (table 4.1).

Family culture was the second most prominent factor (10.55%) that guided healthy eating product customers in sampling healthy eating products on offer in restaurants. Although family culture was only significant in predicting two categories of customer needs (traditional, medicinal and healthy cooked foods at p value=0.000 ; traditional, non genetically modified and organic food products p value=0.001) it was widely selected as a key influencing factor in customer new as only significant in customers' needs among customers. Family culture is a way of life that usually influences a family member's tastes, selection and preference of certain foods. A family member may consume what he believes is his community's traditional food. However, in some cases, traditional foods are subjected to foreign cooking methods such as deep frying which may lead to loss of the traditional grandeur of the food. In one restaurant, a customer wrote "my early childhood influence". Although Benelam (2009) argues that meals eaten outside the home typically contribute more calories, fat and salt than those eaten at home, this study established that healthy eating product customers thought otherwise. The change in customer perceptions of products on offer in eating outlets was informed by the shift in what customers considered to be a healthy food product. The study established that customers had shifted from nutritional levels of food components such as fat, sugar and salt to thematic areas like traditional foods, sea food and organic foods. Healthwise (2017) agree that cultural and social meanings attached to food guide peoples' choice of meals during meal time. This study does not however consider cultural and social meanings attached to food as factors that influenced customer food choices parse, but cultural foods as an important factor. Whereas cultural meanings focus on stories behind food or the beliefs attached to various food products/ingredients, this study found that customers generally selected traditional food products because of the characteristics associated with this category of foods. The perceived characteristics that customers attached to traditional/ cultural foods include: foods grown in natural un-contaminated environment; foods grown without the use of fertilizers/ other chemicals such as pesticides; unrefined food products; medicinal foods; foods that had the ability to prevent illnesses and prolong life.

Medical prescription as a factor that influenced the healthy eating product customer food choices came in third position (5.5%). It was also a significant factor in influencing customer needs for traditional, non genetically modified

products and organic food products (p value=0.001). Dietary medical prescription is the guide given to patients by medical practitioners on the diet they should adopt in order to prevent occurrence of an illness or to manage an already diagnosed medical condition. In other cases, restaurant customers adopted diets to prevent illnesses because they were associated to persons who had been prescribed dietary management of illnesses. The study found that indeed, a proportional section of healthy eating product customers sampled foods based on medical prescriptions. A customer in one restaurant wrote "sampling these foods makes it easier to control my blood sugar"; in yet another restaurant, a restaurant supervisor wrote "we receive customers on low cholesterol and low sugar diets". The study established that most cases where customers sought dietary management for an illness, its onset was likely to have been triggered by food consumption habits. In other cases, diet was used as a preventive measure for illnesses that could emerge from poor food consumption habits.

Media/school/books scored 5.0% as a factor that influenced healthy eating products sampled by customers. The media is used to advertise, sensitize and inform people about food choices in eating outlets and their impact on human health. Schools on the other hand fight ignorance and enlighten the population on food choices that are available for human consumption and their long term effect to consumers. Peer/social influence yielded 0.3% as a source of information on healthy food products on offer in restaurants to customers. Customers who were influenced by their peers or social groups emanated from internet users, school goers, hospital groups or other groupings. Persons who were influenced by their peers/social groups originated from common settings in which they met and interacted. The study concludes that major factors that influencing healthy eating product meal choices were the need to lead a healthy lifestyle (78.7%); family culture (10.5%); medical prescriptions (5.5%); media, school or books (5%) and peer, social influence at 0.3%. A chi-square value of 0.000 and an r significance value of 0.00 on factors that influenced healthy eating product customer needs and customer needs confirms the significance of various factors in influencing customer needs for healthy eating products. .

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

- a) Various factors influence the healthy eating product customer needs.
- b) There is a significant relationship between factors that influence customer needs for healthy eating products and the healthy eating product customer needs
- c) Factors that are significant in influencing customer needs for healthy eating products are the need to lead a healthy lifestyle, family culture and medical prescriptions.

VII. FUTURE SCOPES

The researcher intends to carry out other studies with a similar sample in different locations to confirm the findings.

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