

Deep Demand Study of Taipei's Healthy Breakfast Eaters

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Abstract

Taipei is one of the high-tech metropolis in the world. Their many advantages aside, high-tech cities are also likely to cause the problem of “social McDonaldization.” The standardization and homogenization of the food industry ensures that people do not need to cook three meals a day. Relying on instant food is increasingly becoming the norm. The current lack of transparency with regard to the ingredients used and the food manufacturing process employed, however, trigger varied problems related to food safety and diet. This study takes Taipei breakfast foods as its subject. Urban residents living in Taipei mostly buy their breakfast from chain fast-food restaurants. Stores that offer this service are low priced, easy to find, quick, and convenient. The breakfast foods sold at these stores are manufactured in factories that use chemicals and are frozen and then reheated for consumption. Breakfast beverages generally comprise chemically improved milk, tea, or fruit juices made from concentrate. Frustrated city dwellers are now beginning to become aware of healthy diets and to ascertain the needs and wants of healthy breakfast eaters; this study conducted interviews of six people in Taipei who were conscious about their well-being. The purpose of this study was to discover the nutrition requirements of healthy food eaters in Taipei so as to contribute to the future development of breakfast restaurants that serve wholesome and nourishing meals. The findings of this study could be used as reference for future breakfast store owners.

Keywords: Social McDonaldization, standardization, homogenization

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Introduction: The McDonaldization of Diet

As the fast-food chain industry has become increasingly popular, the McDonald business model has been applied in various forms. With its focus on the standardization of processes, the McDonald business model has sought to homogenize the taste of offered food items across the world and to accurately calculate the grams of each ingredient and the required heating time. This business model has made it possible for consumers to find the unchanging taste of an item they remember wherever they are in the world. The taste of the food, its appearance, the basic layout of the stores, and the behavior of employees are made consistent around the globe. The business model operates like a mechanized production line in a factory. Workers do not need to have the specialized skills of chefs. They only need to “assemble” foods. The low cost and high efficiency of this business model, paired with the ubiquity of the stores, make fast food extremely accessible (Ritzer, 2012).

The demand for meals is highest at peak times such as breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The chains tend to avoid perishable food and offer pre-handled or pre-cooked options (Kanyan, Ngana, & Voon, 2016). The McDonald's restaurant model uses technology to control manpower and extremely rational methods to control production and sales. As a result, the food loses its uniqueness. Thus, people should ask themselves, are these fast-food restaurants using local ingredients? Is the food healthy? Is the meal nutritious? These concerns, in fact, do not appear to be the most important considerations for consumers. Perhaps this is because the service and products provided by the chain fast-food restaurants are so fast, inexpensive, and delicious that people are willing to turn a blind eye toward the chemical additives that they are consuming. Urban residents are often willing to compromise their health for these conveniences (Ritzer, 2012).

Problems with Taipei Breakfast Options

In 2012, Common Health Magazine surveyed the five big breakfast store chains in Taiwan. These brands included My Warm Day (麥味登), Ruilin Mei & Mei (瑞麟美而美), Good Morning (早安美芝城), Hongya Hamburger (弘爺漢堡), and Julin Mei & Mei (巨林美而美). According to the surveys conducted at three of each brand's breakfast outlets, 100% of the workers display habits that point to poor hygiene. For example, the workers do not wash their hands before touching the food ingredients or they work on making the food while also tending to the cash register. 40% of the workers mixed cooked food with uncooked food, causing bacterial contamination. A sample of the forty-six most commonly sold items was examined, and 40% of the foods were found to have high levels of microbes. Nine of the tested articles of food contained high levels of *E. coli* bacteria.(林慧淳，民 101)

In addition to food safety issues, Common Health Magazine also investigated the nutritional balance of the meals on offer. The results showed that the most frequently purchased meals for consumers were too greasy, the amounts of fruits and vegetables were too small, and protein-based foods were also insufficient. Foods such as ham, bacon, chicken nuggets, and hamburgers were high in sodium content. One meal could yield as much as half of a recommended daily serving of sodium. Beverages were generally high in sugar content and mixed with chemical additives that inhibit

the body's ability to balance and absorb nutrients, creating an additional burden. (林慧淳，民 101)

User Research

By utilizing observation techniques to understand the behaviors, needs, and motivation of consumers, user research yields better mental models. It can grant a more thorough understanding of the problems of users and can display the gaps between reality and requirements (Dagbagli and Araujo, 2015). Thus, user research can become a starting point to finding a solution that prioritizes features and help us to clarify which characteristics are most important and which can wait. It is now used in many creative industries and serves to bring to the surface the hidden demands of consumers.

An important information from users that is generally ignored can be learned from their narratives and non-verbal cues in response to pictorial prompts in image interviews. A user research method created by Zaltman, named the “Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET),” accord investigators the opportunity to understand the opinions, behaviors, and feelings of consumers in relation to a particular service. This research methodology assists ameliorated communication between users and providers. Service providers can thus develop tailored offerings with their users in mind (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995).

Research Subjects

Previous research has demonstrated that the eaters with low health consciousness are less motivated to choose healthy food for their body. They prefer to choose emotional edibles that let them feel happy (Buhrau & Ozturk, 2018). In this study, the researchers eliminated the group of users who exhibited this behavior. Among the respondents who were currently living in Taipei, two engaged in regular fitness exercises. The intake of various nutrients is related to physical exercise. Excessive oil and sugar intake will cause the body to store excess fat. Therefore, it is best to adhere strictly to a healthy diet of three meals per day. Two of the chosen respondents were accustomed to eating healthy breakfast meals prepared by their mothers at home and paid attention to the choice and quantity of ingredients and seasoning. Thus, the respondents that consumed fast food infrequently were generally not accustomed to the heavy taste of fast food. One of respondents was affected by the news and by health-related information and paid attention to diet and nutritional intake so as to avoid future diseases. The respondent was more likely to select more balanced meals and was reminded about the importance of eating nutritious meals when observing people with unhealthy diets. One of the respondents had suffered from serious skin disease because of long-term consumption of high-oil, high-sugar, and high-starch food, coupled with the accumulation of daily stress. These individuals hoped that by adjusting their modes of living and their diet they could improve their physical health in Taipei. The demographic information pertaining to the selected respondents is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Respondent	Gender	Age	The reason to become Healthy Breakfast eater	Being a Healthy Breakfast eater
01	Feminine	23	Affected by family eating habits	23 years
02	Masculine	24	Affected by family eating habits	2 years
03	Feminine	24	Affected by the news and by health-related information	3 months
04	Feminine	25	Suffered from serious skin disease	3 months
05	Feminine	25	Regular fitness exercises	3 years
06	Masculine	27	Regular fitness exercises	5 months

Research Methods

The authors interviewed six high health consciousness eaters by using the ZMET to map their underlying demands. Respondents were required to provide 15 to 20 photos of their definition of a “healthy breakfast diet” and to provide a narrative describing their own perspectives and experience with regard to eating a wholesome breakfast. To ensure that the interviews were comprehensive, the researchers asked questions to prompt the interviewees. The participants responded to questions in an one-on-one interview. In this way, the researchers were able to clarify the needs of people with healthy diets with regard to breakfast.

The steps of the interview were as follows: (1) Storytelling: The respondents narrated their story based on the pictures they selected; (2) Extended storytelling: The interviewer asked if there was a concept or idea related to healthy eating that could not be expressed through the picture collection; (3) Sorting: Respondents re-categorized the pictures by themselves and named the categories using tags to establish a structure; (4) Representative pictures: Respondents extracted the most important pictures based on their personal needs; (5) Comparison of images and ideas: Respondents thought about the differences between their ideas about healthy eating and their own pictures while comparing and contrasting the two; (6) Sensory description: Respondents described what it felt like to consume healthy foods using their five senses; and (7) Summarizing images and stories: Respondents reviewed and edited the most pertinent ideas related to healthy eating. They created an image that could be used to summarize their ideas from the pictures they selected and wrote a hundred-word essay summarizing the meaning of this image (胡惠君, 2015).

Analyzing the Features of a Healthy Breakfast Diet

After the interview of ZMET, the authors collated the major points of consensus arrived at through the participant responses. Separated the features into three categories: attributes, consequence, and value with regard to a healthy breakfast diet. The authors only recorded features that were mentioned by three or more participants. This information is provided in the table below:

Table 2. Features of healthy breakfast diet and the number of respondents (A)

Code	Features of Healthy Breakfast diet	Number of Respondents
Attributes		
A01	Paying attention to the quality of ingredients	5
A02	Appropriate serving sizes	5
A03	Taking healthy diet seriously	3
A04	Not succumbing to temptation	3
A05	Eating Un-stimulating foods	4
A06	Recognizing the food items	4
A07	Whole foods	6
A08	Attaching importance to the food materials	3
A09	Eating natural foods	6
A10	Flexibility choose of meals	4
A11	Protecting the body	4
A12	Being influenced by others	4
A13	Understanding the functions of food	4
A14	Focusing on the food one is eating	3
A15	Finding one's own way to eat	3
A16	Refusing unhealthy food	5
A17	Eating balanced meals	6
A18	Being influenced by research	3
A19	Paying attention to the way the food is cooked	5
A20	Knowing the metabolic cycle	3
A21	Being alert to bad experiences	4
A22	Eating meals simply flavored and without chemical additives	6
A23	Creating one's own definition of diet	4
A24	Body balance	4
A25	Recovering from illness	3
A26	Being attracted to the food	3
A27	Easy to implement	4
A28	Eating proportionally	4
A29	Commercial exploitation	3
A30	Being in touch with the people	3
A31	Personal habits	4
A32	Eating food that is clearly described	3
A33	Helping consumers clearly understand the ingredients	5
A34	Refined foods	3
A35	Eating foods with nutrients that the body can absorb	4
A36	Providing full energy foods	5
A37	Tremendous	4
A38	A low body burden	3

Table 3. Features of healthy breakfast diet and the numbers of respondents (C)

Code	Features of Healthy Breakfast diet	Number of Respondents
Consequence		
C01	Caring for body nutrition	4
C02	Helpless obedience	3
C03	Envyng someone	3
C04	Afraid of unhealthy cooking method	5
C05	Having a doubt	3
C06	Eating an unhealthy meal because of the lack of time	4
C07	Capacity for independent thinking	3
C08	Providing healthy foods that help consumers start the day	5
C09	Foods that can be prepared by hand	6
C10	Eating too much because one does not want to waste	4
C11	Doubting how others can absorb the food they eat	3
C12	Poor physical condition	4
C13	Eating at the right time	4
C14	Focusing on the body's perception of food	5
C15	Estimating the characteristics of the food	3
C16	Enabling consumers to reflect by themselves	5
C17	Sense of satisfaction	3
C18	Providing foods that consumers love	5
C19	Comparing foods	4
C20	Eating to make up for a deficiency	3
C21	Eating to feel relieved	4
C22	Tasty food	4
C23	Providing an environment or method that can teach consumers about the ways other people eat	5
C24	Expectations from the meal	3
C25	Self-projection	4
C26	Meeting others' needs	3
C27	Worrying about eating too much	3
C28	Meals to help develop healthy eating habits	6
C29	Relaxing	4
C30	Inner peace	3
C31	Trusting the food	3

Table 4. Features of healthy breakfast diet and the numbers of respondents (V)

Code	Features of Healthy Breakfast diet	Number of Respondents
Value		
V01	Meeting the basic demand (satiety)	3
V02	Making consumers feel willing to experiment and try new meals	5
V03	Providing micro-customized services	5

V04	Self-judgment	4
V05	Understanding one's body	4
V06	Allowing consumers to decide on their own whether or not the food is healthy	5
V07	Self-persistence	4
V08	Eating foods that can control the intake of dietary nutrients	6
V09	Self-actualizing	3
V10	Self-examination	4
V11	Experiencing oneself	3
V12	Self -motivation	4

Table 2 elucidates that healthy breakfast eaters and breakfast shops should pay special attention to the provision of whole foods and natural foods in a balanced and adequate meal. The meal should be based on simple and natural flavors without chemical additives. Healthy breakfast eaters want to eat high-quality foods that provide body energy. They will refuse unhealthy foods and would like to know the food ingredients and the way the meals are prepared.

The consequences recorded in Table 3 demonstrate some abstract features. Healthy breakfast eaters are afraid of harmful cooking methods and prefer handmade foods. The food allows them to reflect on themselves. Although they care about the body's absorption of the food, their eating also depends on whether they like the taste. A healthy meal can develop good eating habits and can provide a good beginning to a day. The way other people eat is also something people imitate.

In terms of value as registered in Table 4, most respondents mentioned foods that can control the intake of dietary nutrients. Healthy breakfast eaters and breakfast shops need to find or provide foods that can make people willing to experiment. They should provide some micro-customized services and allow consumers to decide on their own whether or not the food is healthy.

Conclusions

Analyzing the results, the authors suggest some options for healthy breakfast store owners: (1) food quality (2) natural foods (3) balanced diet (4) transparency in ingredients and cooking methods. Healthy breakfast eaters focus on foods that are good for their body, but they also want to feel good when they eat the food. A balanced meal they can trust is also important to them. It is recommended that shops provide a way to let customers know about their business model, where their foods come from, and how they cook these foods. Considering the aspect of special services, stores should provide a multitude of options for consumers with different preferences and needs so that their patrons can try a variety of healthy eating methods and are gradually able to develop the habit of healthy eating.

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