

# **The psychology of the foodservice consumer**

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## **Abstract**

The science of foodservice consumer psychology is the study of psychological phenomena that occur in this type of consumer activity and the rules that govern it.

## **I. Research target, method and goals**

The focus of this research is the psychology of consumers and service providers within the foodservice/restaurant sector, the causes of psychological phenomena, how they develop and the rules governing them.

The goal is to study the various kinds of consumer patterns relating to food services, demand, motivations and behaviour.

Methods used are: observation, practical experimentation, consultation and surveys.

## **II. Theoretical bases of foodservice consumer psychology**

1. General psychology serves as the basic theoretical foundation for the study of human behaviour and psychology in consuming foodservices.

2. The common characteristics of foodservice consumerism are: impulse, habit, motivation and choice.

3. Development phases of consumer psychology are: low level, medium level and high level.

## **III. Consumer feelings, needs and motivations**

1. The following senses are used by foodservice consumers: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing (music), each having a psychological link with consumer behaviour.

2. The types of foodservice consumer demand are: custom- or tradition-based, low cost bargain-hunting, utilitarian, for health and safety, innovative, aesthetic, or to satisfy a need to feel superior.

3. Three important factors influence demand in the restaurant sector: impulse, extrinsic stimulation, attractiveness of the desired foodstuff.

## **IV. The behaviour of food product consumers and foodservice consumers**

1. Behavioural characteristics of consumers in restaurants: clearly defined objectives, stable habits, consumer-orientated products, the consumer is in control, is aware of his rights, his behaviour is varied and complex.

2. Individual characteristics of the food product consumer and his behaviour: these vary depending on the individual, his self-awareness, his psychological and mental state. They will determine the psychological gap that exists between food products consumers, which manifest themselves as personal preference, personality, temperament and ability. These factors influence consumer patterns.

3. Social forces influencing the food consumer: economic factors, customs and traditions as well as gender, age, family, community and social class. Cultural differences also influence the psychology and behaviour of consumers.

4. Food consumption psychology differs between children, youths, older people, women or those with unusual food habits.

#### **V. Psychology of service providers in the restaurant industry, and the psychological role of the price of goods**

1. The attitude of personnel in this sector usually bears the following traits: a feeling of exploitation, a negative mindset, lack of cooperation.

2. The psychological role of price on consumers in the restaurant sector: consumers are familiar with the prices of certain products and very sensitive to any changes.

#### **VI. Restaurant brand image, interior decoration and the psychology of foodservice consumerism**

In conjunction with changing material and spiritual living standards, the aesthetic demands of customers in the services they buy are also rising. The search for aesthetic perfection is important and ranges from better-designed interiors and logos, to improved lighting, waiters' uniforms and choice of cutlery. Better presentation of food also influences customer choice.

#### **VII. Psychology of the cooks**

Bad habits that need to be addressed: nonchalance, stubbornness, jealousy, pretentiousness, inferiority complexes.

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