

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CHEFS' PERSPECTIVES ON CONVENIENCE FOODS

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Abstract

When and how much to employ ready-to-eat meals is a constant debate in the hospitality sector. There has never been an explicit examination of this subject in the hospitality literature, despite its relevance. Paper and pencil surveys were then administered to university food managers in an effort to better understand this issue. Convenience food items save time and money, but their perceived consistency and greater portion control aren't as essential to consumers, according to the results of the study. Non-convenience meals also tend to improve client connections, appealing to certain demographics, and the aesthetic attractiveness of finished products.

Keywords: examination, chefs,' perspectives, convenience, foods

I. Introduction

A lot of things have changed in the food service sector in the last few decades. The foodservice sector is evolving as a result of demographic shifts. The newest Standard & Poor's research on the restaurant business found that "baby boomers" with high discretionary incomes prefer to eat out since they don't have the time to cook, and their children and grandkids don't appear to have the desire in doing so either (Abdullah, *et al.* 2021). There are a number of trends that we should keep in mind when considering how hospitality businesses operate and structure themselves in the ever-changing business environment. A mix of technological and social and cultural innovation is required for food service sector innovation. By constantly competing with chains and small restaurants that must simultaneously enhance delivery speed and lower costs while maintaining quality, the art of classical cooking is always being tested. Preparing meals "from scratch" is becoming increasingly unproductive and impractical, hence "convenience foods" are being substituted.

II. Statement of the issue

When looking at the topic, there are a number of pros and drawbacks, as well as a number of aspects that come into play. The term "apparent advantages/disadvantages" refers to those advantages/disadvantages identified in the literature as potentially accompanying the use of convenience items in food production; the term "situational factors" refers to those areas identified in the literature as potentially bearing both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the perspective or the reference point (Batat, 2020). Convenience items may save time and money, improve portion and cost management, make training and assessment easier, add visual appeal, and improve customer relationships through product uniformity, safety, and simplicity of storage in food service operations (Sevel-Sørensen, 2020). On the other hand, the apparent downsides include higher waste, employee dissatisfaction, more mobility of workers, and increased emotional labour for the supervisor. Changes in the conventional back-of-the-house hierarchy and the traditional advancement and promotion procedures, as well as culinary authenticity themes, are all examples of situational factors.

Academics and professionals in the hospitality business can both benefit from examining the issue of convenience foods more closely. There are many ways to approach a problem, and it's important to know as much as possible about all of them before making a final decision. Because of this sub-quick market's expansion and rapid adoption of new concepts, an investigation of this topic in a university dining facilities environment is particularly valuable (including the adaptation of convenience foods) (Cifci, *et al.* 2020). By analysing the benefits and drawbacks of adopting convenience items in university food-service operations as viewed by the chefs in these operations, this study aims to begin addressing the aforementioned gap. In light of the fact that it is difficult to evaluate all of the benefits and drawbacks of convenience food items at the same time, the study will focus on the most important aspects of their use.

III. Summary

Over the past few decades, the food service business has seen a significant amount of change. More and more people feel it counterproductive and impractical to prepare meals "from scratch," hence "convenience foods" are increasingly being used in their place. There is no empirical study on the effects on a food service business of substituting fresh items with convenience ones. This study's goal is to help both practitioners and academics replace educated guesses with informed judgments and better foresee the probable effects of choosing one sort of product over the other (Bröcker, 2021). Expanding university food service operations have been spurred by a growing student population. In light of the rapidly expanding size of the sub-market and the increasing pressures to quickly adapt novelty (e.g. convenience foods) in order to meet an ever-increasing demand for diverse products, investigating the issue of convenience foods in university dining facilities should prove particularly useful.

IV. Literature review

Labor mobility

The high mobility of chefs is one of the most pressing issues in the hospitality industry today, and the pooling impact of deskilling and standardisation appears to have an apparently largely unexplored role.

Labour turnover and attrition are two more categories that (Fooladi, *et al.* 2019) use to further dissect labour mobility (also known as inter-occupational turnover). According to the writers cited above, bad working circumstances appear to be the most common cause of attrition in the hospitality and tourist industry, just like they are in other industries. Many instances of 'perceived bad working circumstances' include unsociable working hours, low income, and physically and psychologically demanding work situations. Low remuneration for low-skilled workers who solely [or largely] handle convenience items exacerbates the industry's already-unacceptably long work hours.

According to some, the physical and psychological working conditions of people who use pre-prepared convenience meal alternatives in their operations are better because they don't need to know how to cook (Ji, *et*

al. 2022). Convenience food handlers are an interesting case study because of the unique circumstances they face in terms of both remuneration and working conditions.

Waste

Finally, waste is a major drawback of convenience foods that has to be addressed (Mohanty, *et al.* 2022). There is more packaging waste from convenience foods than from raw materials since these items are frequently portioned out separately and packaged in non-sustainable ways (most commonly available and purchased in bulk).

Emotional labor

An in-depth look shows that those hired to handle pre-prepared products are more often than not inexperienced cooks, and the strain on those who have the skills and are in charge of supervising the less-experienced cooks is exponentially more difficult (now not only having to deal with their main culinary duties but also oftentimes repairing mishaps of those who simply do not know better).

V. Methodology

The major goal of this study is to compare university dining chefs' perceptions of convenience vs non-convenience food products. Chefs' perceptions of the consequences of using one product over another in the above-mentioned context are also a focus of the study (Roy, & Ballantine, 2020). To do this, in Chapter III, the procedures used to conduct the study are described. Methodology, equipment, sample selection, and data analysis all fall within the purview of this chapter.

VI. Research Design and Procedure

Self-reported questionnaires were used to gather data for this study's research goals (Gillis, *et al.* 2022). Research on food safety, commercial food storage, quality, food cost, training and assessment, transfer, employee motivation and work satisfaction, food service management and labour mobility went into developing the survey instrument. In the absence of scales, questions were formulated based on the existing literature and the advice of culinary professionals.

VII. Analysis

Two groups were created to test for nonresponse bias: (I) those who responded within the first two weeks and (II) those who did not reply within the first two weeks. Nonresponse bias was reduced because there were no statistically significant differences between the early and late responders.

A paired samples t-test was used in conjunction with descriptive statistics. First, we looked at how much time and money can be saved by using convenience foods in college cafeterias (as outlined in the research question), as well as how much portion control and customer relationships can be improved (as outlined in the research question), and how well convenience foods can accommodate special dietary needs (Hodgkins, *et al.* 2019). It

was determined that Likert-type scale reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were needed to assess eye-appeal and culinary originality, as well as training, training transfer, and assessment (nine questions).

VIII. Conclusion

Filling this knowledge gap in the hospitality literature has the potential to help both academics and industry workers. The results of this exploratory study support some previous conclusions, contradict others, and raise a number of new issues. As the next section describes, some of these areas need additional exploration (Lai, *et al.* 2018). Using convenience meals in large-scale food production has both advantages and disadvantages, with the biggest differences being in the areas of time and labour savings and incentive, respectively.

For portion control, it didn't matter if the final product was made up mostly of convenience or non-convenience meals, and even while consistency was rated higher for convenience foods than non-convenience foods, the differences were minor. When non-convenience items were in issue, the responders looked to have stronger customer service and a greater capacity to cater to certain groups. The chefs explained their preference for non-convenience foods for special groups by citing their inability to regulate the components in these items (i.e. convenience foods) and the randomness of their ingredient lists. These convenience meals may have a general trait that was overlooked when reading the literature or a specific attribute of the goods employed in this study's research. Non-convenience foods (as opposed to convenience foods) were seen as having a better ability by the chefs to build good customer relationships (compared to convenience foods), and further investigation of this facet was proposed, especially since the respondents did not seem to notice a link between product consistency and good customer relationships as the literature indicates; the question would be whether this link was not obvious to just the subjects in the present sample.

Culinary pride as well as the features of the researched context may explain why goods cooked with non-convenience meals had a better visual appeal than those prepared with convenience foods (which does not fundamentally centre itself on a sophisticated product). Convenience foods may benefit from the use of a different instrument for measuring this concept. Training chefs/ cooks/ employees to work with convenience foods appears to be easier than training them to work primarily with non-convenience foods, despite the fact that they are paid less than their counterparts who work with non-convenience food. Reproducing the study in a new location may be important for several reasons, including the fact that these findings may be a hidden property of the studied environment. Due to the fact that open ended responses raised some issues that were not considered critical (and therefore were not included in the empirical investigation), it appears functional and constructive to conduct a more comprehensive study of convenience foods that includes all of the aspects identified in the literature review.

IX. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

The study's largest and most evident weakness is its inability to generalise because of the limited sample size. The study should be replicated in a variety of contexts, maybe starting with other university dining facilities and then going on to diverse food business sub-sectors. Certain terminology, such as "waste" or "customer interactions," may benefit from clarification or rephrasing/rewording, since there is some suspicion that certain replies received went the route they did because certain terms were misconstrued or ambiguous. A wide range of benefits and

drawbacks can be gained and faced by incorporating convenience items into the food manufacturing process in this study, particularly via the first examination. In terms of the job's authenticity and aesthetic elements, as well as its financial aspects, the use of convenience meals appears to have a significant impact. However, the extent to which this has an impact on the job's authenticity, as well as its financial aspects, remains unclear. Academics should keep in mind that convenience food research has a lot of space for improvement.

X. References

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