

Impact of Meal Context on Eating Out at Night

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Abstract. Eating out is a common occurrence in the lives of most people. At dinnertime, there are number of options an individual or family have. In the wake of societal changes like the rising number of single-parent households and an increase in the number of career women in the work force, the eating out population at night has been increasing. This paper analyses the impact of meals on the choice behaviour of consumers, identify the key drivers of the dinning behaviour of people at night, and to analyse the relationship between the choice of meal and peer influence on dinning pattern of consumers. A sample survey was conducted with a structured questionnaire. Data was collected through convenience sampling method from 100 respondents. The data has been analysed using factor analysis technique. The result shows the major reasons why consumers prefer to eat out at night in restaurants are more food options and dining out is a social event. The major motives of eating out at night are fun with friends and family, attraction towards restaurant, and out for relaxation. The findings of the study can be helpful for the restaurants to understand the consumer behaviour and in formulation of better policies to delight the customers.

Keywords: eatingout, mealcontext, at night, dinning behaviour, choice of meal, dinning pattern

1. Introduction

Eating out is a common occurrence in the lives of most people. At dinnertime, there are a number of options an individual or family chooses from. This study is focused on better understanding the relationship that a group of individuals have with eating outside the home at dinnertime. In this study, the food environment was explored from a number of different directions in order to understand how people make the choice to eat out. First, the food environment was looked upon in terms of the reasons that people choose to eat out and how people utilize restaurants. Then the food environment was looked at from the point of view of the functions that restaurants have in society today as places for social connections and resources for new ideas. Finally, the historical growth of restaurants and the food industry was considered in order to try to better understand how the food environment has been able to grow to the extent that it has [Anthony Epter (2009),[“Why do People Make the Choice to Eat outside the Home”]. The idea that eating out is about much more than the nourishment the food provides was apparent throughout the entire research process and provided the overarching theme for the discussion of the research.

The first area that was explored was the different reasons why people make the choice to eat outside the home. This was the prospective area of interest when beginning the research project. Other reasons include the positive experience of eating out as well as the escape from routine that going out to eat provides [Warde A, Martens L,(2000),“Eating out”].

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In the wake of societal changes like then rising number of single-parent households and an increase in the number of career women in the work force, the eating-out population has been increasing (Janet Chang , An-Tien Hsieh,(2006) “Leisure motives of eating out in night markets”). Dining outlets are more volatile, changeable and fashion-prone than tourist attractions.

2. Literature Review

Netemeyer, Heilman, and Maxham (2012) examine the effects of identification constructs (the degree to which employees and customers identify with an organization, employee organizational identification (employee OI) and customer–company identification) and the related construct of customer perceived similarity to employees on customer spending. This study reveals that the effects of employee OI, customer perceived similarity to employees, and their interactions on customer spending are not fully mediated by customer identification. The effect of customer-perceived similarity to employees on customer spending is partially mediated by customer identification. This study also shows that the effect of customer identification on customer spending is stronger than the effect of customer satisfaction.

Fornell , Rust and Dekimpie (2010) The study reveals that a better understanding of consumer spending growth should results in better marketing plans and better sales forecasts, which in turn should lead to superior decisions in all area of marketing, including product, pricing, promotion, distribution, capacity planning, and staffing decisions.

Otto, Davies, Chater and Stott (2009) analyse the customers by studying their spending behaviour. The underlying aim here is to evaluate spending behaviours and to find the dimensions on which to differentiate between customers. By using factor analysis seven different dimensions are studied to differentiate the customers, those are, leisure & travel, general, maintenance, regulars, risk & social, service orientation and future Orientation.

Anthony Epter (2009) Growth of the Food Industry-The food industry has shown expansive growth over time to become what it is today. Only 70 years ago, in 1939, only 19.2% of all food expenditures were made on foods away from home and of these sales away from home only 7.1% was from limited-service or fast-food style restaurants.

According to Nestle, as of 2003 the food industry accounted for almost 13% of the U.S. gross national product and employed 17% of the country’s labour force.

Chang and Hsieh (2006) investigate the leisure motives behind eating out in night markets. Researchers find that self-identity, consumption, inexpensiveness and variety, informal atmosphere, relaxation, enrich eating experience and fun are the leisure motives of eating out in night markets.

Pleifer, Haskins and Conroy (2005) try to clarify distinction between two of the most important terms in interactive marketing: customer lifetime value (CLV) and customer profitability (CP).

North, Shilcock and Hargreaves (2003) investigate whether classical music leads to higher purchase intentions and time spent in restaurants than that of pop music or no music. The researcher by using MANOVA analysis revealed that classical music promotes an upmarket atmosphere, which leads to increased purchase intention than both no music and pop music.

Choosing to eat Out-The final and main area of importance to this research is looking at what drives people to make the choice to eat out as often as they do. People make the choice to source their meals from restaurants and take-out places more than ever before.

- Exciting experience
- Escape from routine
- Health concerns
- Learning knowledge
- Authentic experience
- Togetherness

- Prestige
- Sensory appeal
- Physical environment
- Physiological reasons

3. Analysis and Interpretation

3.1. Demographics

The data regarding the demographics has been collected which includes age, gender, occupation and family income per month. The data is compiled by tally bars which has been analysed by percentage method. The tabular form of which has been presented below:

Table. 1- Age

Age (yrs)	18-25	26-35	Above 35
Responses (In %)	52	32	16

Table. 2- Gender

Gender	Male	Female
Responses (In %)	53	47

Table. 3- Occupation

Occupation	Student	Businessman	Salaried	Homemaker	Any Other
Responses	52	11	25	12	-

Table. 4- Family Income/Month

Family Income/ month (Rs)	Below 15000	15001-25000	25001-35000	35001-45000	Above 45000
Responses (In %)	2	15	20	28	35

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) shows measure of sampling adequacy, it tells whether the sample size is enough or not. KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.596, which is above 0.5, so we can now continue with factor analysis. Sample size also shows significance level of 0.00, hence data is adequate for factor analysis.

Rotated component matrix table explains the factor loadings which are the correlation between variables (questions) and the factors generated using factor analysis. Three factors emerged out of nine variables.

Factor- 1: The variables 2, 6 and 9 explaining get bored, not expensive, feel tired load on factor 1. Hence, we appropriately name the factor 1 as “Out for Relaxation”. The factor explains 27.508 % of variance.

Factor- 2: The variables 1, 3 and 5 explaining get, usually go out, to have fun, when friends come load on factor 2. Hence, we appropriately name the factor 2 as “Fun with Friends”. The factor explains 16.455 % of variance.

Factor- 3: The variables 4, 7 and 8 explaining change in taste, variety available, restaurant environment load on factor 3. Hence, we appropriately name the factor 3 as “Attraction towards Restaurant”. The factor explains 12.157 % of variance.

Cumulative percentage of variance is 56.120 %, which is the total variance explained by all factors together. The remaining 43.88% of variance is explained by factors not considered in the study.

4. Summary & Conclusions

4.1. Summary

The aim of this study was to study the “Impact of Meal Context on Eating out at Night.”

Different studies have found out the spending behaviour of consumers at dining restaurant. None of the studies have attempted to examine the impact of meals on the choice behaviour of consumers and how they respond to the environment at the time of dining out. In this study, the food environment was explored from a number of different directions in order to understand how people make the choice to eat out. First, the food environment was looked upon in terms of the reasons that people choose to eat out and how people utilize restaurants. Then the food environment was looked at from the point of view of the functions that restaurants have in society today as places for social connections and resources for new ideas. The present study has the following key objectives:

- To examine the impact of meal contents on the choice behaviour of consumers while dining out.
- To identify the key drivers of the dining behaviour of people at night.
- To analyse the relationship between the choice of meal and peer influence on the dining pattern of consumers.
- To investigate the role of timing of dining out and examine if there is any significant difference between dining at night in comparison to other time slot during day time.

Exploratory and Descriptive research design was used to conduct this study. Data was collected from the sample size of 100 through questionnaires using convenient sampling method. Percentage method and factor analysis techniques were used to analyse the data collected.

The result of the factor analysis revealed three factors, which explained 56.120% cumulative variance. After all the analysis the study concluded that the main reasons for major motive of eating out at night are fun with Friends, attraction towards restaurant, and out for relaxation.

4.2. Conclusion

This chapter contains the major findings of the project and its conclusions. In the present time, life has become so busy and people mostly prefer to eat out in restaurants. The aim of this study was to study the “Impact of Meal Context on Eating out at Night.” On the basis of data collected, following conclusions were drawn:

- The major reasons for eating out at night are more food options at restaurant (50%), convenient than cooking (20%), social event (26%).
- In the area of consumers' eating behaviour, the frequency of eating out at night markets is approximately once or twice a month (46%) and went when they feel like eating (57%).
- Companionship is dominated by friends (43%) and family (47%). Consumers prefer to go out for dinner with friends and family.
- While going out for dinner at night consumers mostly people prefer to go Multi Cuisine (38%), Traditional restaurants (37%) and fast food (23%) restaurants for eating out.
- The main factors that influence eating out at the night as determined by factor analysis are, out for relaxation, fun with friends, and attraction towards restaurant.
- The main motives behind going out for dinner at night are Fun and relaxation (90%) and mostly went on the occasion of birthdays (43%) and exams passed (21%).

Hence this research shows that the major motive of eating out at night are fun with Friends, attraction towards restaurant, and out for relaxation. Consumer went for dinner to enjoy with friends and family and usually they prefer to go Multi Cuisine and Traditional restaurants. The major reasons why consumers prefer to eat out at night in restaurants are more food options at restaurant and social event. So dining out at night is also a social event to interact and enjoy with the friends and family. Consumers mostly prefer to go out for dinner on birthdays and youth also went to celebrate exams passed.

5. References

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