

The Possibilities of Reducing Food Choice to Improve the Performance of College Foodservices

Miranda Miroso, PhD; Joanne Loh, MDiet, RD[†]; Heather Spence, PhD, RD^{*}



ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Submitted 8 February 2015

Accepted 16 December 2015

Available online 11 February 2016

Keywords:

Choice reduction

Foodservice

Menu

Q methodology

2212-2672/Copyright © 2016 by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.12.019>

^{*}Certified in New Zealand.

[†]Certified in Singapore.

ABSTRACT

Background College administrative and management leaders, foodservice personnel, and student residents value social, nutritional, financial, and environmental sustainability in their dining expectations. Menu choice reduction looks promising as a strategy to achieve these goals. However, foodservice research about dominant attitudes across these stakeholders is limited.

Objective To identify qualitative views from all stakeholders about choice reduction to ensure that any changes to the meal service are not to the detriment of consumer satisfaction.

Design A comprehensive list of 74 statements representing the spectrum of attitudes surrounding choice was generated by searching a variety of resources, including academic literature and Internet sites, and by conducting semistructured interviews with stakeholders. A final set of 42 statements resulted from researcher scrutiny for optimum balance, clarity, appropriateness, simplicity, and applicability. A new sample of participants was then asked to sort these 42 statements into a normal distribution grid from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Participants/setting A purposive convenience sample of stakeholders (staff n=5 and residents n=4) was used to identify statements about choice reduction. A second sample of stakeholders (staff n=6 and residents n=29) were recruited to sort the final 42 statements.

Statistical analyses performed Q methodology analysis techniques were used. This involved conducting a by-person factor analysis, using the centroid factor extraction method because of the permissiveness it allows for data exploration. A varimax factor rotation to enhance interpretability of the results identified shared viewpoints.

Results Three dominant viewpoints toward the possibility of choice reduction in the meal service were identified. Factor 1 was “health driven” (in which healthiness was paramount). Factor 2 was “variety seekers” (in which choice had instrumental value). Factor 3 was “choice lovers” (in which choice had intrinsic value).

Conclusions Although participants could see a number of benefits of choice reduction, strong attitudinal barriers existed toward adopting choice reduction initiatives. These barriers need to be overcome to avoid dissatisfaction with the foodservice should choice reduction measures be implemented.

J Acad Nutr Diet. 2016;116:1163-1171.

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT leaders, foodservice personnel, and student residents value social, nutritional, financial, and environmental sustainability in their dining expectations. Foodservice managers are seeking ways to improve consumer satisfaction and improve their overall operations performance, and menu choice reduction looks promising as a strategy to achieve these goals. Consumer choice is generally viewed as being desirable, and, surprisingly, increasingly restaurant operators are downsizing menus or offering only one choice. Restaurant managers benefit from this practice because chefs can focus on specialized entrées, reduced food costs, standardized food quality, and avoidance of food waste.

Ultimately, these measures have the potential to increase profit margins.

SOCIAL AND NUTRITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

O'Mahony and Hall¹ provided a comprehensive review of key determinants that influence choice. These include culture, taste, social status, health and nutrition, food trends, globalization, marketing, convenience, religion, and sex. Another factor determining food choice, though much less explored, is the amount of choice that consumers have. Core theories on decision making suggest that people are better off with increased choice.² Consumer satisfaction with foodservice

choices is predictive of feeling greater satisfaction compared with that of consumers who have no choice.³ In contrast, historical evidence indicates that more choice does not automatically result in more satisfaction.^{4,5} Experimental studies show that when individuals have to make a choice from an extensive choice set, they tend to be less motivated to choose and less willing to buy, and they feel less satisfied with their choice.⁴ Various reasons explain why more choice does not lead to more satisfaction. According to Schwartz,⁵ too much choice produces paralysis rather than happiness. Consumers may not look forward to having to decide from a large and varied assortment. As choice increases, consumers are overloaded with available options, which could have a demotivating effect on their purchase intention.⁴ Individuals may try to avoid having to make a decision by procrastinating, and when consumers finally make a decision, they more often regret the selected option.⁶ Individuals also may experience anxiety at the time that they make decisions. Despite the increasing number of research publications in economics, psychology, and marketing that report the effects of too much choice, specific boundary conditions of the effect are still relatively unknown. For example, how many choices cause the too-much-choice effect?² As well as a range of psychological effects, too much choice could potentially also lead to overeating. No studies, however, appear to make a direct link between too many choices and overeating. Studies have shown that increasing the variety of a food can increase the consumption volume of that food and that even simply increasing the perceived variety of an assortment is enough to increase consumption.⁷

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Colleges focus on the best interests of their residents by planning menus to meet their health and social needs. Food choices are most often based on food availability, cost, food safety, and nutritional value. Cost recovery is one of the key goals of foodservice. A well-known successful strategy to satisfy consumers is to empower them with choice or, most importantly, the perception of choice.⁸ However, providing choice has associated costs⁸; choice reduction could potentially lead to financial savings.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The current food system is not increasingly acknowledged to be sustainable, and additional efforts are needed to reverse its damaging ecological impacts.⁹ Some environmental advocates argue that not only are major changes needed in the food system, but that individuals should modify their food choices and become more ecologically conscious to support a more sustainable food supply.¹⁰ In recent years, sustainability experts, especially those in food policy, have started to promote benefits of choice reduction from an environmental perspective and have espoused the need for more choice editing to rid the market of environmentally damaging products.¹¹ By reducing choice, the burden of responsibility is shifted from consumers further upstream (eg, to foodservice managers). Social consciousness and environmental stewardship has increased on college campuses. For instance, across the United States, a growing number of colleges and universities purchase fair-trade coffee, use renewably

generated electricity, and employ tray-less dining to reduce food waste.¹²

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Although the reported literature indicates potential benefits of choice reduction, potential exists for attitudinal barriers and unintended effects. For example, choice restriction could produce unintended effects such as noncompliance¹³ in a restricted-choice environment, and a ban on soft drink vending machines in schools could result in students bringing soft drinks from home. Boomerang effects are another potential consequence¹⁴ in both restricted and unrestricted environments, where a control could make individuals start to value restricted behaviors more. Therefore, first establishing dominant stakeholder attitudes toward choice is important to ensure successful implementation of choice reduction initiatives. This research explores stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions around menu choice reduction and the possible circumstances under which less food choice is acceptable. More specifically, the question guiding this study was, "What does choice mean to college staff and residents at meal times?"

In the context of this study's college foodservice, "choice" refers to hot and cold options on the main menu, variety of salads on the salad bar, and a range of drinks at beverage stations. In addition, "choice" refers to whether a tray is used. The study focuses on types of food offered at meal times (eg, sandwich fillings, salads, beverages) that could potentially be reduced, as well as use of food trays. To investigate attitudes to menu choice reduction, Q methodology was chosen, because it provides a means to study individuals' viewpoints. Q methodology is a mixed-methods research approach that uses factor analysis to examine individuals' shared viewpoints that reflect their underlying beliefs and values about a specific issue.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ The correlational methodology has its origins in psychometrics and is a quantitative-qualitative hybrid. Q methodology contrasts with R methodology, the more traditional correlational research method used to measure attitudes, in both its data collection methods and analyses. The biggest distinction between the Q and R approaches is that in R research, respondents are subjects and questions are variables. In Q research, subjects and variables are inverted so that the subjects of the study are the statements and the variables are the people who do the sorting. Thus, in this inverted factor analytic study, the persons working in or eating in the foodservice are the variables. These load onto emergent factors that represent shared views on reducing choice in the foodservice. This method allows the researcher to systematically explore a variety of viewpoints and identify key areas that overlap or differ.¹⁸

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The University of Otago Ethics Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol, and all participants provided written informed consent. The case study college, which housed 250 first-year university students, provided a buffet-style dining service (tray system) consisting of three daily meals.

In brief, a Q methodology study involves defining the research question and generating a comprehensive collection of statements about the topic. This is followed by participants

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5869328>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5869328>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)