



# Investigating the role of personal and context-related factors in convenience foods consumption

Caterina Contini\*, Fabio Boncinelli, Francesca Gerini, Gabriele Scozzafava, Leonardo Casini

Department of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Systems, University of Florence, Florence, Italy

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 2 August 2017

Received in revised form

23 February 2018

Accepted 26 February 2018

Available online 20 March 2018

## ABSTRACT

In the scenario of food consumptions, we witness the consumer's growing consideration for the "convenience" attribute. Our study intends to understand the consumer behaviour towards convenience-processed foods by analysing in a single model the role of beliefs, personal traits, social influence and market availability. We applied a Structural Equation Model (SEM) to a representative sample of 426 Italian consumers. The results show a correlation between intention to consume convenience-processed foods and social influence, market availability and several personal traits, suggesting strategies for the development of the convenience food market.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The cultural and economic transformations of the past decades are leading to an increased market interest in products that make it possible to minimise time and effort. This phenomenon also appears in various food-related activities (Hamermesh, 2007; Jabs & Devine, 2006), indeed to the point that today, convenience has become an important attribute of food choice on an equal standing with taste, price, and nutritional characteristics (Grunert, 2006; Lusk & Briggeman, 2009).

The factors that have laid the basis for the development of convenience foods are in part referable to increased incomes and changes in family organisation. In particular, women's participation in the job market and longer working hours have contributed significantly to increasing the demand for foods that are quick and easy to prepare (Khan, 2000; Swoboda & Morschett, 2001; Verlegh & Candel, 1999). The growing interest around the "convenience" attribute is also correlated to changes in lifestyles, which have seen an increase in the meals consumed alone and at different moments of the day (Jabs & Devine, 2006; Marshall, Duxbury, & Heslop, 1995; de Boer, McCarthy, Cowan, & Ryan, 2004).

Of the approaches proposed to analyse the various elements that can result in convenience foods consumption, many studies are connected with the value system and food-related lifestyles. In this context, scholars have pointed out that the consumption of

convenience meals is connected with the beliefs about convenience food attributes (Brunner, van der Horst, & Siegrist, 2010; de Boer et al., 2004) and with several personal traits (Buckley, Cowan, & McCarthy, 2007). In particular, scholars highlight the importance of cooking skills (Brunner et al., 2010; Buckley, Cowan, McCarthy, & O'Sullivan, 2005) and time pressure (Botonaki, Natos, & Mattas, 2008; Buckley et al., 2007). The role of time pressure on convenience behaviour has also been analysed by Scholderer and Grunert (2005), who have verified the importance of the perceived time and budget constraints by using a model that sums up the household production approach (Becker, 1965) and the convenience orientation approach (Candel, 2001).

In the ambit of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), several authors (Mahon, Cowan, & McCarthy, 2006; Olsen, Sijtsma, & Hall, 2010; Verlegh & Candel, 1999) have shown the influence of the social environment on convenience food consumption.

Finally, the literature points out the major impact of the system of provision on what individuals eat (Steptoe, Pollard, & Wardle, 1995), identifying a relationship between an increase in the consumption of convenience foods, their variety and the number of places where they are available (de Boer et al., 2004).

The paper's main contribution to the state of the art is represented by improving the understanding of consumer choices concerning convenience foods by means of an interpretative model of consumer behaviour which, in a single framework, considers all the principal elements that emerge in literature as decisive in the purchase of convenience foods, but that to date have been considered only separately. In particular, we propose a Structural

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [caterina.contini@unifi.it](mailto:caterina.contini@unifi.it) (C. Contini).

Equation Model (SEM) capable of understanding the reciprocal relations and the role of beliefs, personal traits, social influence and market availability in convenience foods consumption.

Our paper will shed new light on the relationship that exists between personal and environmental factors with respect to the consumption of convenience foods, and thus contribute to answering the following questions: what is the role of the individual beliefs? Which is more influential, personal judgement or social conditions? How much do personal endowments count in terms of skills, time and budget? Does the offer of a vast product range effectively stimulate consumption?

To answer these questions, a study has been conducted in Italy where we witness changes in food habits (Casini, Contini, Marone, & Romano, 2013), including an evolution of traditional cuisine towards more modern culinary practises (Counihan, 2004). In this framework, convenience foods take on an increasingly more important role, indeed to the point that Italy ranks among the four biggest consumers of convenience foods in the European Union, along with the UK, France, and Germany (Statista, 2017). In particular, in 2016, the average annual per capita spending on these products was 55 euros, equal to 2.7% of the Italian family's food expenditure. We note the prevalence of this consumption among single people, especially young people (less than 35 years of age), whose annual expenditure on convenience foods was 135 euros, which corresponds to 5.4% of their total food spending (ISTAT, 2017).

The paper consists of a first part that describes the conceptual framework in which the specific typology of convenience foods concerned by our analysis is defined, and introduces our hypotheses concerning the factors related to their consumption. The method section describes the SEM, the questionnaire used for the analysis, and the sample. In the following section, the outputs of the model are illustrated. The final paragraph discusses the findings, sets forth the principal implications for consumer-driven product development, and proposes further development of research.

## 2. Conceptual framework

Convenience foods are defined in literature as products that help the consumer minimise time, physical and mental effort in all food-related activities (Brunner et al., 2010; Buckley et al., 2007; Candel, 2001; Darian & Cohen, 1995). This concept is consistent with the definition of “prepared foods” adopted by the USDA, which identifies “prepared foods” as foods transformed with the aim of reducing cooking efforts (Okrent & Kumcu, 2016).

Convenience foods thus appear to be a multifaceted category with very different characteristics in terms of ingredients and production processes (Costa, Dekker, Beumer, Rombouts, & Jongen, 2001). They include a wide assortment of products that range from fast foods to snacks to meals that can be packaged, canned, or frozen (Jackson & Viehoff, 2016; Scholliers, 2015; Szabo, 2011).

As for the complexity of the meaning of convenience foods, we found it advisable to narrow down our study to a more homogeneous group of products, so as to orient the answers of the respondents towards a better-defined category. In particular, we referred to the classification of convenience foods drawn up by Brunner et al. (2010), and we focused our study on highly processed and moderately processed foods, excluding single-component items and salads.

Towards this end, we make specific reference to convenience-processed foods, defined as “foods either cooked or precooked, consisting of more than one ingredient, for consumption in the home. They include appetizers (i.e. olivier salad, seafood salad or quiche), first courses (i.e. soups, pasta or rice dishes), second courses (i.e. roast chicken, cordon bleu, frozen fish sticks, the

Sicilian eggplant dish known as caponata, or roast potatoes with rosemary), and pizza. Convenience-processed foods do not include: sweets, cheeses and other dairy products, sauces, cured meats, smoked or tinned fish”.

To understand consumer behaviour towards convenience-processed foods, we have developed a model that identifies personal factors (beliefs and traits) and environmental factors (social and market influences) as the antecedents of the intention to consume that in turn can become an actual consumption of convenience-processed foods. The literature review we conducted reveals that scholars have investigated the relation between the usage of convenience-processed meals and beliefs, showing that the evaluation individuals make of the different attributes can be considered as a driver of consumption. In particular, literature points out a positive relationship between the convenience orientation and the following beliefs: value for money (Buckley et al., 2007; de Boer et al., 2004; Mahon et al., 2006; Ryan, Cowan, McCarthy, & O'Sullivan, 2002), and taste (Olsen, 2012; Olsen, Prebensen, & Larsen, 2009). Scholars have also observed the presence of several barriers towards the consumption of convenience foods perceived by consumers as alternatives that are less natural (Brunner et al., 2010) and less healthy (Buckley et al., 2007; Geeroms, Verbeke, & Van Kenhove, 2008; Olsen, 2012; de Boer et al., 2004) compared to foods prepared in the home from scratch. These findings point out that a better perception of the naturalness and healthiness of these products can positively influence the intention to purchase.

Based on the aforementioned evidences, the following hypotheses will be tested:

**H1.** A positive belief about the *value for money* of convenience-processed foods is positively correlated with the intention to consume them.

**H2.** A positive belief about the *taste* of convenience-processed foods is positively correlated with intention to consume them.

**H3.** A positive belief about the *naturalness* of convenience-processed foods is positively correlated with the intention to consume them.

**H4.** A positive belief about the *healthiness* of convenience-processed foods is positively correlated with the intention to consume them.

In the ambit of personal traits, scholars note that individuals choose to consume convenience foods, driven by time pressure, (Botonaki et al., 2008; Buckley et al., 2007; Scholderer & Grunert, 2005), available budget (Scholderer & Grunert, 2005), and limited cooking skills (Brunner et al., 2010; Buckley et al., 2005). Bearing these findings in mind, our study proposes to test the following hypotheses:

**H5.** Good *cooking skills* are negatively correlated with the intention to consume convenience-processed foods.

**H6.** A high *time pressure* is positively correlated with the intention to consume convenience-processed foods.

**H7.** A greater availability of *monetary resources* is positively correlated with the intention to consume convenience-processed foods.

As far as the social environment is concerned, studies have found that the convenience foods choice can face opposition from social pressure deriving from the fear of negative judgements from the persons closest to the consumer, as the use of these products can be associated with a lack of care and attention towards family life and guests of convivial occasions (Costa Schoolmeester, Dekker, & Jongen, 2007; Olsen, 2012; Olsen et al., 2010). In this framework,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7305619>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7305619>

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