

Acuity of In-Store Cooked Food Retailing (An Exploratory Study On Consumer Behavior On In-Store Prepared Food)

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INTRODUCTION

In-store cooked food retailing is seemingly a new concept in Botswana, with almost all the supermarkets engaged with the concept. However, to the best of our knowledge, little or no research has been carried out on this matter. Healthy and clean eating has become a major concern for consumers due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, the in store foods are prepared without the consumers' presence and the customers end up using in store cues to help them in selecting the best store to buy their food from. Akbay et al (2005) and Hiemstra and Kim (1995) found out that food quality, variety and environment significantly affect customer satisfaction in fast food outlets. Food quality, cleanliness and value are the three most important attributes in fast food restaurants.

The studies seen so far investigated the consumer's perception and of restaurants and fast food outlets (Ali, Et al , 1997, Maryam, 2004, Seung-Hee et al. 2006) and the attributes used for arriving at decisions to buy/not to buy and where to buy. Other studies such as (Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994) focused on retail store selection for shopping of groceries. So far, we have not seen a study focusing on in-store cooked food.

In the last few years, there has been upward surge in sales of in-store cooked food in the city with almost all major supermarkets adopting the concepts, and thus adding a kitchen as part of the store. The main objective of this study, therefore, was to find out how these food outlets are perceived. Does an in-store factor determine the perceptions of its consumers; since unlike fast food outlets like KFC, the preparation, processing and handling of food is done without the consumers watching.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✕ To find out factors affecting preferences and motives in the selection of in-store cooked food in main supermarkets in Botswana.
- ✕ To determine how consumers rank the importance of store atmospheric factors when choosing a store to purchase in-store prepared food items.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

A major food consumption trend in the world is that people prefer to eat out a lot. It is predicted that this trend will accelerate in the future. As a result, although fast-food markets may offer greater growth opportunities for marketers, they cannot offer satisfaction to all the customers. There is a segment of customers who prefer traditional food items. The In-store cooked food concept focused on these segments which are growing. Lack of a healthy diet is the main cause of many types of diseases, such as coronary heart disease, cerebro-vascular disease and various types of cancers (Wheelock, 1992; WHO, 1990). According to Sloan (2000), a functional food is "a food or beverage that imparts physiological benefits that enhances overall health, helps to prevent or treat a disease/condition, or improves physical or mental performance. Consumers are not only concerned with the nutritional, functionality, but also with the cleanliness of the food offered for sale. However, it is not easy to ascertain these factors since the food is not prepared in their presence.

The significant role played by the store image within food retailing is unquestionable and many authors such as Arons, (1961); Osman (1973); Doyel and Fenwick, (1974-1975); Lindquist (1974-1975); Malhotra (1983), Birtwistle, (2001) have advocated that a desirable store image facilitated by an active positioning strategy can be considered as a core of

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a retail mix and can be integral in influencing the store choice. This argument is based on the theory that congruence between customers' perception of the store image and the objectives of the store strategy results in customer loyalty towards a store. Store image, therefore, can be considered a means of achieving competitive advantage. Conceptually, store image was first thought of as a combination of functional and psychological (tangible and intangible) attributes of a store, which when combined, defines the way consumers perceive not only the store, but the merchandise sold in the store. (Bithwistle et al, 2003). O'Neill et al, (1998) established that an understanding of perceptual processes formed an important element of models of buyer behavior. Williams (1992), and Hansen (2005) state that an understanding of the perceptual processes is important to the marketer as a customer's decision to purchase a product will be influenced, to a large extent, by the way he/she perceives the product. Marketers', therefore, need to be involved with perceptual processes that focus on how individuals process information about a product prior to purchase (Myers, 1986). An understanding of the perception process in relation to food product quality should be sought on the basis of both the purchasing and the usage situation. As another example, the quality perception process may be moderated by a number of both personal involvements, past experiences and situational variables such as physical surroundings, buying purpose, price among others, which also must be taken into account when seeking to understand consumers' perception of food quality. The perception of quality is a result of an interaction between the consumer's conceptual perception and the consumer's subjective assessment of a food product's quality in a given situation. Models of food choice vary tremendously, emphasizing on different factors such as :

(a) Personal Factors: expectation of food, familiarity, personality, influence of others, appetites, moods and emotions, meanings attached to food.

(b) Socio-economic Factors: Household income cost of food, meaning and status of food, security, society.

(c) Educational Factors: General education, nutrition education.

(d) Biological, Physiological and Psychological Factors: Age, sex, physiology, psychology, biology.

(e) Cultural, Religious and Regional Factors: Cultural origins, religious background, beliefs and traditions of culture and race, geographical region.

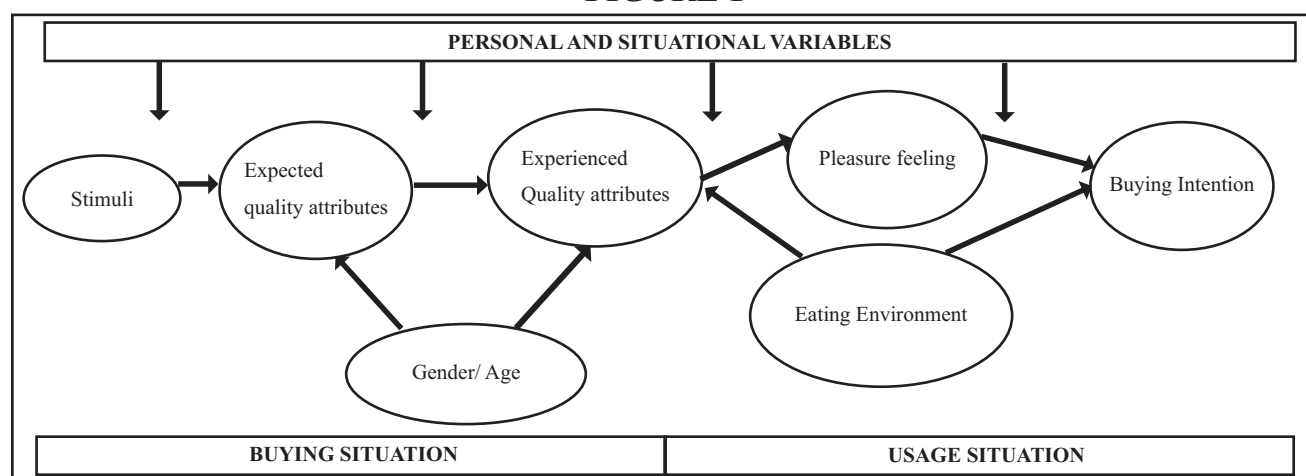
(f) Extrinsic Factors: Environment, advertising, merchandising, time and seasonal variation.

(g) Intrinsic Factors: Appearance, odor, texture, colour, flavor, quantity, quality, preparation and presentation. All these factors affect the perception of food quality and thus, the buying intentions. The basic physiological need of safety is common throughout all cultures, but the means of satisfying psychological and emotional needs varies tremendously between individuals. Herne, S., (1995) Hansen, T. (2005) noted that consumers' perception of quality has received considerable interest in relation to the investigation of consumer food choice.

PERCEIVED QUALITY OF FOOD

Hansen T, (2005) and (Kuznesof et al 1996) acknowledged that consumer quality expectations are based on quality stimuli. It is suggested that “quality stimuli” should only comprise of product properties, which the consumer can perceive with his or her senses before actual consumption takes place.

FIGURE 1



Other product elements are then called attributes. Quality stimuli can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli. 'Quality' as a food product attribute was unsurprisingly considered to be desirable. The components of quality were noted as taste and flavor, presentation through packaging, visual appeal, naturalness, shelf-life, brand name and the retail outlet from which the product would be purchased. However, the model was developed with restaurants in mind. The in-store food quality perception process may differ mostly in that unlike the fast food outlets, the in-store cooked food is a basic restaurant meal sold and consumed in a take away model. It was, therefore, necessary to modify the Kuznesof et al (1996) model to take into account the different factors that are not effectively factored in his model (Refer to Figure 1).

Consumers have pre-conceived expectations from quality attributes that affect the buying intentions. The perceived physical appearance positively affected expected eating quality. In fact, for a competitive company, it should not be enough to offer simply products and services, but it should strain for creating value for consumer. The more distinctive and inimitable the product is, the more possibilities there are of having loyal consumers (Bigne' et al., 2000). As a result of these previous reasoning, we suggest that the perception of quality associated with symbolic attributes of a product will positively influence consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Espejel 2007).

✱**PRICE:** Kuznesof et al 1996 emphasized that price was one of the most important product attributes to both traditional consumers and some of the undecided group. Price reflected the consumers' ability to make preferred product choices, particularly with regard to ethically and environmentally sensitive products, and provided the means to purchase greater variety and quality products:(Deliza et al 2006). Price, as reported, was considered an important variable in consumer food choice. Despite its importance, price was not the principal attribute that influences the consumer choice, according to the majority of papers cited in this review.

✱**NUTRITION:** Considering that food involvement refers to the level of importance of the food on consumer's life, we can assume that level of food involvement may vary across individuals and can be an important factor in purchase decision. The interest in production method, nutritional information, protected denomination of origin/certification and origin seems to be directly associated with consumer's product concerns. It was verified that consumers were concerned about ethical, environmental, social and health factors which were important variables on food choice.

It has been reported that “nowadays, consumers are more interested in nutritious, healthy and convenient foods”. It may justify the reasons why context variables have been the most investigated extrinsic variables in food studies. (Kuznesof et al 1996).

✱**HEALTH:** According to (Davies & Smith, 2004), healthy eating is important for health and endorsement is given to the guidelines of the Balance of Good Health . The key message is enjoyment of a variety of foods and to eat some foods from four groups every day including: bread, other cereals and potatoes; fruits and vegetables; milk and dairy foods and meat, fish and alternatives.

A fifth group of foods is described as containing fat and sugar with the advice to use sparingly.(Herne 1995) emphasized that to place all these various phenomena in context convenience, price and appearance only exerted a mild influence on choice when compared to personal and family preferences. Perceived taste and health beliefs were stronger motives in food selection by older people than price, convenience and prestige. The relationship between gender and food choice is intricate, operating at two conflicting extremes. On the one hand, women appear to make consistently healthier food choices than men. The general result was that women's diets were of a higher quality than men's and tended to be more varied.

✱**HYGIENE:** This category referred to cleanness and hygiene practices within the store. Respondents felt that the standard of cleanliness was high because the staff wore gloves to handle food. Negative experiences were a result of poor hygiene practices, where cooked meat being sold at the store was unclean. These results confirm that older people, just like other market segments, express their need for hygiene in food. (Hare et al 2001).

✱**CONVENIENCE:** Kuznesof (1996) states that health and convenience were viewed as important food product attributes. However, the discussants tended to trade product attributes against one another according to the underlying

motivations for the purchase and product usage: “I think taste and quality is most important, but I would not be too concerned about preservatives and additives if I have convenience”.

STORE ATMOSPHERIC FEATURES AND CONSUMER PURCHASE PATTERNS

The significant role played by store image on food retailing is unquestionable, and a desirable store image facilitated by an effective positioning strategy can be considered as a core of the retail mix and can be integral in influencing store choice. This argument is based on the theory that congruence between consumer perception of the store image and objective of market positioning strategy results in customer loyalty towards a store. Store image can, therefore, be used as a means of achieving a competitive advantage. A wide belief exists that consumers perceive the store image to be desirable if it is congruent with their self image or the image that they aspire (Davlin, 2003). Sinha (2004) found that a desirable store image will attract and at the same time, make them enjoy their shopping experience. Wirtz et al (2006) emphasized that pleasure feeling in the food usage situation should not only be seen as being linked to the food product itself, but is also linked to the situation-in this case, the physical surroundings in which the purchase situation took place (Hansen 2005).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

SAMPLING FRAME

Convenience sampling method had been adopted for this study. A sample size of 300 was envisaged, due to the small population of Gaborone, and other constraints. However, the researcher managed to collect data from 280 respondents. Non-probability sampling was used as noted by Saunders (2007), since by using convenience sampling, it is easiest to obtain the responses of the sample.

The sampling frame comprised of all consumers at the five main shopping malls and centers in Gaborone, Botswana. 60 questionnaires per mall were distributed for survey. Surveying consumers at those locations was deemed appropriate as that is where the majority of consumers shop for in-store cooked food as well as the fact that they were anchored by the supermarkets, all of which have adopted the concept and have several fast food outlets.

DATA COLLECTION

A self administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The reason being that the past studies used the questionnaire methods and the researchers were successful. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A was about the demographics, Section B had questions on store choice, type of food purchased and frequency of purchase; Section C had questions that captured the factors that affect the preferences and motives in food choice and selection, then the last Section D analysed the perceptions of consumers on the in-store prepared foods. All the questions were close ended, and only two (2) were open ended. The 5 point likert type scale was used.

FINDINGS

Out of 280 respondents, 152 were males and 128 were females, indicating that people who buy in-store prepared food are mostly male. There were 6 age categories of respondents ranging from below 18 years to over 51 years. In general though, the sample was predominantly between the age of 18 years to 30 years (over 65%); while the upper age group was less than 2%. Almost 75% of the respondents were married, while the rest were single (Table 1).

The in store prepared food being a new concept in the country, the researchers wanted to investigate its adoption as compared to the fast food. There was no significant difference in the food type bought, which is the rate at which the fast foods are bought; which is close to that of meals. This statement is supported by the statistical information which shows a slight difference in purchase between the two. About 57% of the male respondents prefer buying ready to eat meals while and about 52% of the female respondents buy fast food items. However, the researchers noted differences in gender, age and occupation in the buying preferences after cross tabulation. From Table 2, it was noted that male respondents prefer meals to fast food items as opposed to females, who prefer fast foods over meals. Overall, even though the difference is not that much, fast foods were preferred over meals by respondents. Table 5 shows that respondents in the age categories of below 18 years, 25-30 years, 31-40 years, and 41-50 years prefer meals over fast food; whereas, respondents in the 18-24 years age category prefer fast food. This is mostly consumers at the tertiary

level; respondents in the age group of above 60 years showed no difference in preference of the food type offered by the stores.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics Of The Respondents

VARIABLE	n=280	%
GENDER		
Male	152	54.2
Female	128	45.8
AGE		
Below 18	7	2.5
18-24	93	33.1
25-30	90	32.2
31-40	52	18.6
41-50	33	11.9
51+	5	1.7
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	206	73.7
Married	71	25.4
OCCUPATION		
Student	97	34.7
Unemployed	9	3.4
Employed	123	44.1
Self-employed	51	17.8

Table 2: Frequencies For Gender And Age Differences In Food Preference And Store Choice

VARIABLE	MEAL (INSTORE) %	FAST FOODS%	CHOICE BASED ON MAJORITY
GENDER			
Male	56.8	48.3	Meals
Female	48.2	51.7	Fast Foods
	n=135	n=125	
AGE			
below 18	5.4	3.2	Meal
18-24	10.1	11.5	Fast Foods
25-31	18.0	12.9	Meals
31-40	11.5	9.4	Meals
41-50	6.5	4.3	Meals
51+	3.6	3.6	Both
Total	55.1	44.9	100

FACTORS AFFECTING PREFERENCES AND MOTIVES IN THE SELECTION OF FOOD

The other part of the questionnaire investigated factors that are considered important in influencing decisions made by consumers in store choice for food. A wide range of factors were listed and respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance they attach to each factor in the store choice for food. The list consisted of food area layout, taste, prices of food, customer service, cleanliness of the store, waiting time to be served, crowding of shoppers, wide range of food choice, food display, smell/ambience, clear out counters.

✶**FOOD AREA LAYOUT:** According to Table 3, out of the 280 respondents, 53.4% consider food area layout important, 32.3% considered it to be not important. It can, therefore, be concluded that food area layout is an important factor for respondents in their food store choice decision.

Table 3: Factors Determining Purchase Of In-Store Food

Factor Group	Important & Most important (n=280)	Neutral (n=280)	Not & Least important (n=280)
PRODUCT QUALITY			
Food Taste	90.7	5.9	3.3
Store Cleanliness	89.8	6.8	1.6
Food Smell	70.3	18.6	11.0
MARKETING			
Waiting Time	70.3	22.0	6.7
Customer Service	84.7	11.0	4.2
Food Prices	76.3	12.7	9.3
Food Choice	71.2	16.9	11.0
Shoppers Crowding	55.9	22.2	22.1
ESTHETICS FEATURES			
Food Display	64.4	16.9	17.8
Check Out Counters	53.9	25.4	20.5
Food Area Layout	53.4	14.4	32.3

✧ **THE FOOD TASTE :** 90.7% consider food taste important when it comes to factors to consider when choosing a store to buy food from, only 3.3% viewed it as not important.

✧ **FOOD PRICES:** 76 % of the respondents rated food prices as important.

✧ **FOOD VARIETY:** 71.2. % of the respondents viewed food choice as Important; while 11.0 considered it not important.

✧ **CUSTOMER SERVICE:** 85% of the respondents regarded customer service to be an important criterion while selecting a store for purchasing in - store food. Among these 85% respondents, 50% considered this criteria as most important; 4% of the respondents rated the customer service as not or least important in deciding which store to choose over others. 84.7% is quite a high percentage, meaning that indeed customer service is of vital importance in food retailing.

✧ **STORE CLEANLINESS :** was considered of high importance, with about 90% respondents regarding it as most important or important criterion. Only 2% of the respondents considered store cleanliness as not and least important.

✧ **WAITING TIME:** This aspect yielded a total of 70% of importance from the responses of the respondents, important being the highest with 45%, neutral 22% and less than 7% for the not and least important side.

✧ **CROWDED RESTAURANT:** This factor was considered most important by 56% of the respondents, important by 32% of the respondents; 22.2% of the respondents consider the factor to be a neutral factor and the remaining 22.1% consider the shoppers' crowding as not/least important.

✧ **FOOD SMELL:** This aspect was considered to be an important factor by 70.3% respondents; whereas, 11.0% of the respondents did not consider it important.

✧ **CHECKOUT COUNTERS:** 53.9% of the respondents' considered it to be important; but 20.5% found it to be unimportant.

From the above, it is notable that the top three factors that respondents considered when choosing the store from which to purchase ready-to-eat food **are taste, store cleanliness and customer service**. Food prices, food choice, food smell, length of waiting time before being served, food display, shoppers' crowding and checkout counters followed. Factors

affecting preferences and motives in food selection are, food taste, store cleanness, customer service, food prices, food smell and food choice to be served, since they were given a high ranking among other factors to be considered as far as food purchasing is concerned.

There are significant gender differences in the level of importance of the factors. According to the study, it is notable that male respondents consider the waiting time to be more important than females and no one among the males ranked the waiting time as not important. Shoppers' Crowding is an important factor for males, while female respondents said that the factor was not important to them in choosing which store to buy their food from. Females on the other hand consider food area layout when choosing the store to buy their food from. As compared to males, the price factor ranks higher in their priority list while deciding the store from where to buy their in store prepared food. Checkout counters were an important factor for male respondents; but was not given much importance by their female counter parts.

CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION OF IN-STORE PREPARED FOODS

To measure perception of consumers' with regards to in-store-prepared food, respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement, using a five-point Likert scale, with different statements covering aspects such as **Health, Convenience, Dangers Of Food Poisoning, Affordability, Hygiene, Variety Of Food To Choose From, Nutrition, Quality, Buying Purpose, Pride Level**. Respondents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a five point scale (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree; 3, neutral; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

Table 4: Summary Results Of The Perceptions Of The Respondents (%)

	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
P1.	In- store prepared food are healthy	5.1	28.8	40.7	19.5	5.1
P2.	In -store Prepared foods are convenient for me	2.5	8.5	17.8	44.9	24.6
P3.	In-store prepared foods pose dangers of food poisoning	3.4	16.9	22.9	43.2	12.7
P4.	In-store prepared foods are expensive	3.4	18.6	26.3	36.4	14.4
P5.	In-store prepared foods are generally hygienic	6.8	30.5	37.3	17.8	5.9
P6.	You get a wide variety of food from In-store prepared foods	4.2	27.1	18.6	42.4	6.8
P7.	I would proudly recommend the In-store prepared foods to the first time foreigners in Botswana	15.3	31.4	18.6	27.1	6.8
P8.	In-store prepared foods are nutritious	5.9	32.2	43.2	13.6	4.2
P9.	I buy in store prepared food when at work	9.3	8.5	13.6	49.2	16.9
P10.	I buy in-store prepared food as a home take away for family	40.7	38.1	10.2	9.3	0.8
P11.	In-store prepared foods are of low quality standard	6.8	12.7	30.5	29.7	18.6

✳**HEALTH AND CONVENIENCE:** For statement *P1*, 34% respondents felt that in-store prepared foods are unhealthy, 25 % of the respondents' perceived in-store foods as healthy. Statement *P2*; 70% of the respondents showed an agreement to this statement and those who disagreed constituted 11% of the respondents. Most of the respondents felt that the in-store prepared foods are convenient for them.

✳**FOOD SAFETY AND PRICES:** 56% respondents agreed with the *P3* statement that in store prepared foods pose a risk of food poisoning. However, 20% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Using the statement on *P4*, 22% of the respondents disagreed that the in-store prepared foods are expensive, but 51% agreed with the statement.

✳**HYGIENE AND VARIETY OF FOOD (STATEMENT *P5*):** 37% of the respondents disagreed, while 24% agreed that in-store prepared foods are hygienic. 49 % of the respondents agreed that in-store prepared foods provide a wide variety of food to choose from, but only 31% respondents disagreed with this statement.

✳**PRIDE FOR IN-STORE FOODS AND NUTRITION:** 48% disagreed with the *P7* statement, whereas 34% would recommend the in- store prepared foods to the first time foreigners in Botswana. 38% of the respondents disagreed with the statement *P8*, whereas, 18% agreed with the statement that in-store foods are nutritious.

✳️**REASONS FOR BUYING IN-STORE PREPARED FOODS:** Most respondents agree that they buy in-store prepared food when at work; this is implied by statement *P9* which, 66% of the respondents agreed to, whereas 18% disagreed with the statement. For statement *P10*, 79% disagreed that they would buy in-store prepared foods as a family take away, while 10% agreed with the statement.

✳️**QUALITY:** 48% of the respondents agree with the statement *P11*, while 20% disagree that the in-store prepared foods are of low quality.

DISCUSSIONS

The results imply that most of the in-store prepared food buyers are male. The age categories that engage in purchasing of the in store prepared foods are 18-24 years and 25-30 years, single and employed. The working class has time pressures and hence resorts to the in-store prepared foods as they are convenient to obtain and healthy to eat. Food evaluation factors and their importance level were identified as well. They are: Food taste, store cleanness, customer service, food prices and variety of food choice. The last six factors of importance are: Food smell, waiting time, food display, shoppers' crowding and checkout counters and food area layout. According to (Baron and Mueller 1995) who carried out their studies comparing the Bulgarians and Czech customers, "It is important to assess which areas are sources of perceived product difference. Characteristics carried forward from the importance section as the top five in the food selection are: **packaging, appearance, freshness, price value and taste**. It was noted that Czech customers rate appearance more highly than Bulgarians. From the study, it is noted that Botswana consumers view store atmospherics, food taste, food prices as some of the attributes they consider important when deciding where to buy food from. Consumers from these three countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Botswana) attach a lot of importance to the food taste and the food prices when deciding where to buy.

A gender difference was noted in the level of importance attached to some of the factors. Male consumers gave more importance to time related factors in choosing a store to buy their food from, such as shoppers' crowding and waiting time. On the other hand, females consider the food area layout and food prices to be the most important factor in their decisions of where to buy their food from. These results suggest that food retailers should take into consideration the importance level given to every factor by the consumers when in business, plus differentiate their store environment based on the target customers' gender and age.

Consumers who had a negative perception of the in-store prepared foods noted price, nutrition and hygiene as the main negating factors. This reason, may in addition to other reasons, explain the reason why females rarely buy in-store food and the fact that very few females agreed that they do buy for home consumption. It was noted that price is important to females as they will rarely buy the food if it is perceived to be expensive. They, however, showed a positive perception in terms of convenience aspect of the in-store prepared foods, they are also satisfied with the variety of in-store cooked food offered by the stores.

The consumers disagreed that health, nutrition and hygiene factors are taken care of in in-store prepared food items. This implies that consumers do not trust the in-store prepared food items, as far as the hygiene, health and nutrition aspects are concerned. The consumers also feel that the food safety level is poor as they believe that the in-store prepared foods can pose food poisoning, risk, which is in line with Brennan et al's 2004 study on public food safety issues. Hence, it was concluded that consumers generally believe that they are more at risk from food eaten outside the home than from food prepared at home. This lack of confidence in the in-store-prepared food items may explain the reluctance of the respondents to recommend it to the first time visitors to the country and buying for home consumption. Most respondents perceived the in-store prepared food items to be of low quality. Most consumers bought the in-store prepared foods when at work or at school.

CONCLUSION

The supermarkets are involved in fierce battles for market share, sales growth and ultimately an increase in Total Returns. This prompts the food retailers to formulate strategies that will help them adapt and respond accordingly to consumer's tastes and preference changes, especially in this economic crunch time. The survey demonstrates that there is a high degree of acceptance of in-store prepared foods in Gaborone. There is an observation that the rate at which fast foods and in-store foods are preferred is almost the same, this shows that even if the in-store cooked meals concept is new, it has potential to outdo the fast foods since they came into the picture long before the in-store meals. It is evident

that the in-store food is preferred more than street vending due various hygiene factors. In-store environment plays an important role in the promotion mix of the retail outlets. It is evident that consumers do not only focus on the food itself when choosing where to buy the food from; aesthetics and marketing aspects are contributory factors to the choice of store decision. Stores can gain a competitive advantage by creating a positive perception on aspects such as health, nutrition, hygiene, customer service, food quality and safety so as to satisfy the target market and enjoy the trust and positive word of mouth. Despite the negative perception on some factors, there is a positive attitude on the basis of convenience, variety of food provided.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The increase in the number of people 'eating out' is a challenge to the supermarkets. They have responded by increasing prepared foods, especially branding of ready meals. This calls for more innovativeness and risk taking, making the best out of a prevailing opportunity. The retailers should engage in Food branding- they should extend this cooked food branding to manufacture other related products like - in-store juice , coffee, etc. to improve the in-store shopping experience. The in-store prepared foods are bought by consumers when at work or school, but they consider it as not good enough for family take away, a perception that retailer's should endeavor to correct. Food labeling should be taken into consideration-packs should indicate facts like nutrition value etc., the cooking methods should also be appropriate, in that the nutritional content of the food is not lost. Stores should not underestimate the power of the in-store atmospherics (cleanliness, food area layout) as to some degree, they add value attached to food and hence can be used to attract and retain customers and remain competitive.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

A study should be carried out to get the retailers' perspective with regards to in store foods and how they counter act the negative perceptions of the in-store foods. It would be desirable to contrast the results in other representative geographical areas in Botswana.

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