

# AIMING AT UNDERSTANDING CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOR IN FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS: A FOOD VALUES APPROACH

---

Izquierdo-Yusta, Alicia; Martínez-Ruiz, María Pilar; Pelegrín-Borodón, Jorge;  
Jiménez-Zarco, Ana Isabel

Universidad de Burgos; Universidad de Castilla la Mancha; Universidad de la Rioja;  
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

## RESUMEN

*A partir de la clasificación de los valores alimenticios propuesta pertinente por Lusk y Briggeman (2009), este trabajo buscaba comprender el comportamiento de los consumidores en los restaurantes de comida rápida. Con este objetivo, se analiza una muestra de 400 consumidores de dos cadenas de comida rápida líderes en España. El análisis empírico de estos datos nos permitió observar no sólo la presencia de tres grupos de consumidores distintos de acuerdo con sus evaluaciones de los valores alimentarios, sino también varias diferencias entre estos grupos con respecto a hábitos diversos, así como resultados de satisfacción, confianza y lealtad. A partir de estos resultados, se proponen diversas recomendaciones estratégicas para mejorar el diseño y desarrollo de estrategias diferenciadas en la industria.*

## Palabras clave:

*Valores alimenticios, cluster, frecuencia, satisfacción, lealtad.*

## ABSTRACT

*Beginning with the classification of food values proposed in the relevant literature by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), this paper aimed at understanding consumers' behaviour at fast-food restaurants. With this research goal in mind, a sample of 400 consumers was gathered in two different leading fast-food chains operating in Spain. The empirical analysis of these data enabled us to observe not only the presence of three different consumers' clusters in accordance with their food values 'assessments, but also several differences between these groups with regard to diverse habits as well as satisfaction, trust and loyalty outcomes. From these results, several managerial recommendations have been proposed in order to improve the design and development of differentiated strategies in the industry.*

## Keywords:

*Food values, cluster, frequency, satisfaction, loyalty.*

## 1. Introduction

Consumers have today growing concerns regarding the food they eat. These concerns range a wide variety of topics, from the dangers of food poisoning and other food safety issues (such as chemical additives, high fat content and related chronic diseases), for instance, to environmental and regulatory issues (Worsley and Lea, 2008). Derived from the acknowledgement of how diverse segments of consumers appear to evaluate differently these concerns, several research lines in the areas of consumer behaviour and food marketing have emerged.

Trienekens et al. (2005) suggested that the changing lifestyles of Western(ised) consumers led to greater demand for certain convenience healthy food, such as pre-cut fruit and pre-packaged salads. Moreover, there is growing household concern regarding the purchase of healthy, nutritious foods, and numerous studies have highlighted how people are increasingly interested in purchasing food that has not been directly linked to obesity and excessive weight gain (Bharath and Foster, 2009; Chou et al., 2012; Korzen et al., 2011; Rozin, 2005).

Relatedly, extensive research has been done on sustainable food choices (Boert et al., 2007) and organic food consumption, trying to understand the underlying motivations of the consumers who buy these products, the personal value dimensions embedded in their motivations, and their attitudes and intentions towards such products. Some attempts have been made to observe how food attributes, values and aspects related to sustainable production might influence consumers' food-related decision-making processes. As a matter of this fact, Lusk (2011) examined household scanner data and found that demand for certain organic food products (milk and eggs) depended significantly on respondents' food values: people who were relatively more concerned about the environment and tradition exhibited a higher demand for organic milk and eggs than for non-organic milk and eggs, suggesting a belief that organic offerings are more traditional and environmentally friendly.

In addition, an increased household interest in purchasing products that comply with basic ethical and sustainable development standards is currently observed (Bilharz and Schmitt, 2011; Chou et al., 2012; French and Rogers, 2010; Mankato et al., 2007; and McMahon et al., 2010); that is to say, many consumers around the world are worried about issues such as the environmental impact of food production or social aspects, such as salary or working conditions.

However, there are also other consumer groups, whose primary concern continues to be cost either cost –that is, they look for the cheapest food possible (Abdullah, 2011; Iglesias and Guillen, 2004; Kara, Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu, 1995; Park, 2004; and Tse, 2001) –, either social issues, such as the gradually increasing number of two-income families, leading to changes in social habits – families have less time to cook and eat at home – together with other changes, such as fewer children or higher household income (as both spouses are working). Moreover, people today feel the need to socialise – whether with colleagues, friends or neighbours – more than they used to for business or social purposes, so that they are less inclined to cook at home (Islam and Ullah, 2010) and eat more meals outside (Kara et al., 1995).

These tendencies represent several challenges for operators in the restaurant industry, which evidences the need to design and develop strategies tailored to specific market segments. On the supply side, the restaurant sector is highly atomised, with companies catering to very specific consumer segments (vegetarian, organic, etc.) or adapting their

offer to segments with specific needs (e.g. gluten intolerance). Producers and manufacturers likewise offer products aimed at more specific segments to better meet consumers' needs. On the demand side, consumers are increasingly seeking products that not only meet their immediate needs for nutrition, but are also environmentally friendly and socially responsible, and whose consumption evokes sensations and provides experiences. Hence, it is therefore necessary for restaurants to develop strategies to differentiate themselves from their competitors and gain thorough knowledge of their customers.

Within the restaurant industry, is worth to mention a global phenomenon such as the rapid expansion of fast food restaurants in major cities all over the world, accommodating the changing consumers habits of urban populations (Schroeder and McEachern, 2005; Xu, 2014; Tong and Wong, 2016). This phenomenon evidences the need to assess the relevance of the previously mentioned tendencies in this type of restaurants in particular, especially taking into account how some relationships between fast-food consumption and declining food prices and weight gain and/or obesity have been previously outlined (c.f. Currie et al., 2010).

Based on these ideas, the goal of this paper is to understand the current consumers' behaviour of fast-food restaurants. With this intention in mind, we use the classification of food values presented by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), which relates to many of the previously mentioned tendencies, to classify consumers of fast-food restaurants into different clusters, and to investigate significant differences between those clusters with regard to diverse habits as well as diverse non-financial key results –in particular, satisfaction, trust and loyalty. The results of this study are used to propose a series of recommendations for the management of fast food restaurants.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Food values and the fast food context***

As previously pointed out, along the past few decades several modifications in the traditional buying and consumption patterns and behaviors have been observed when purchasing and consuming food products. For fast-food business managers it is essential to understand which are the aspects that guide consumer preferences for certain foods – this will enable to emphasize those aspects in their marketing strategies and to get a better competitive positioning.

With this regard, it is interesting to highlight the work of Lusk and Briggeman (2009), who went beyond the food attributes traditionally considered to offer a classification of food values as a set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, and desired end states associated with purchasing and consuming food. The values were proposed upon a deep literature review on food preferences and human values, and outline the convenience to take care of customers not as simple consumers but as complex and multi-dimensional human beings (Martínez-Ruiz and Gómez-Cantó, 2009).

These values face most of the aspects and tendencies previously depicted, such as the growing concern for nutrition (nutrition, safety), the natural environment (environmental impact), social justice (fairness, origin, tradition, naturalness) and whose consumption evokes feelings and provides experiences (appearance, taste, convenience). Hence, it seems advisable for managers of fast food restaurants to assess those values among their customers in order to develop a better knowledge to develop

differentiated strategies and achieve a better competitive positioning. Moreover, in today's ever-changing and highly competitive market environment, food-service operators must prioritise understanding the market to retain and sustain a strategic advantage (Abdullah et al., 2011).

This is especially relevant taking into account how the restaurant industry has certain characteristics that clearly differentiate it from other sectors, in terms of the service it provides. On the one hand, its products must be good quality; on the other, the act of consuming them must offer customers 'sensations' and 'an experience', amongst many other things. It is flexible, somewhat traditionalist, and dependent on context to offer a high degree of customisation. It thus provides an ultimately short-lived, fashionable product in a highly simulated environment. At the same time, it is the industry to see the most blatant operationalisation of service, the 'McDonaldisation' that Ritzer (1996) called the other face of postmodern consumer society. In short, it is an industry in which companies must differentiate to compete.

Several works in the relevant literature offer interesting related findings. For example, Kara et al. (1995) looked at consumers' perceptions of and preferences for fast food restaurants in the US and Canada. According to their study, consumers between the ages of 12 and 24 look for variety, price, delivery service, and location in America and for price and novelties in Canada. Amongst customers age 46 and older, Americans prioritised cleanliness, nutritional value, quality and taste when choosing a fast food restaurant, whilst Canadians gave preference to nutritional value and seating capacity. In the middle group of customers between the ages of 25 and 45, Americans valued speed and friendly wait staff, whereas Canadians looked for speed, quality and service.

Also, Brown et al. (2000) emphasised the need for nutritional awareness in their exploration of fast-food preferences amongst teenagers. Becker-Suttle et al. (1994) examined age (seniors vs non-seniors) and the benefits sought by customers of full-service restaurants, whilst Shank and Nahhas (1994) compared the dining preferences and behaviours of mature and younger customers of a family restaurant. Williams et al. (1997) took a slightly different approach and attempted to determine both the physiological and psychological challenges faced by older restaurant customers. Islam and Ullah (2010) found that, for fast-food consumers in Bangladesh, especially university students, brand reputation was the most important factor when choosing an establishment, followed by proximity and accessibility, similarity in taste, cost, value for money, discounts and taste. Trailing these factors were cleanliness and hygiene, salesmanship and décor, fat and cholesterol, and self-service.

Bowman et al. (2004) reported that consumption of fast food amongst children in the US seems to have an adverse effect on dietary quality in ways that could plausibly increase the risk of obesity. However, that study suggested that a more detailed experimental analysis would help to determine the effect of perceptual attributes on consumer demand as well. Specific qualities of taste, consumer self-esteem, restaurant reputation, and other non-measurables may be relevant to a comprehensive treatment of an attribute-based fast-food model.

Comparing survey data of college students in Spain and the US, Bryant and Dundes (2008) offered insight into how perceptions about fast food are culture- and gender-specific. More American college males (61%) prioritised value (amount of food provided for the money paid) than did any other group of respondents (35%), and relatively few American college males (29%) cited nutritional status as important (versus 60% of other college respondents). The convenience of fast food is more

important to Americans (69%) than Spaniards (48%), whilst more Spanish college students (49%) than Americans (18%) objected to the proliferation of fast-food establishments in their own country.

## ***2.2. The relevance of the customer-business relationship***

Anderson and Fornell (2000) assume businesses exist and compete to create satisfied customers. Investors are attracted to companies that excel at satisfying their customers. It is not possible to increase business prosperity without increasing customer satisfaction. It is not the amount of goods and services a company can produce that leads to its success so much as how well it satisfies its customers, convincing them to return and keep the business growing. Providing a variety of fresh, healthy food remains an important criterion for satisfying customers (Qin et al., 2010).

This also applies for the fast food industry, since the success of any food and beverage establishment lies in its ability to satisfy customers by providing a dining experience that comprises both tangible and intangible elements and is able to meet or exceed their expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the past, if the food – the tangible aspect of the experience – was good, then customer satisfaction was ensured. As people have become more gastronomically sophisticated, however, they have likewise become more demanding in terms of their dining expectations. Newer generations are shifting away from the traditional towards the new, the innovative and the exciting, all of which are qualities that are primarily determined by the intangible aspects of the dining experience. Whilst many traditionalists might believe that innovation can only be achieved through tangible elements, such as the introduction of a new food item, intangible aspects have the power to evoke deep, long-term emotions and memories (Zopiatis and Pribic, 2007).

In this regard, Ryu et al. (2010) divided fast-food customers into those who patronise fast food restaurants for hedonic reasons and those who do so for utilitarian ones. The findings indicated that both hedonic and utilitarian values significantly influenced customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions and that customer satisfaction played a significant role in changing behavioural intentions. Thus, restaurateurs should acknowledge and seek to improve customers' perceptions of both hedonic and utilitarian values to ensure satisfaction and, in so doing, encourage positive behaviour and emotions, such as returning to the restaurant or talking positively about their dining experience there. Thus, managing customer satisfaction levels is a critical strategy for fast food restaurants to retain current customers and attract new business via word of mouth (Qin and Prybutok, 2008).

Trust built between consumers and a company significantly contributes to positive outcomes for the company with regard to factors such as customer loyalty, customer retention, product choices, purchase intention, willingness to act, and overall market performance (Erdem and Swait, 2004). It is thus more critical than ever for companies to be considered trustworthy by consumers, and companies should focus on what it takes to build such trust with their customers. Despite extensive research on brand trust, most of which has focused more on the results of trust (e.g., loyalty and repeat business) than its predictors, the question of what builds trust in consumers remains largely unanswered. Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced the notion of trust as a critical factor for successful relationships in the service sector, suggesting that clients should be able to trust service providers, feel secure with how they are treated, and trust that any information they might provide will be kept confidential. All these considerations are

crucial for companies trying to gain customer loyalty and expand their stable customer base.

Many researchers have provided empirical evidence for a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions, such as the intention to return to an establishment or engage in word of mouth. The obvious reason to satisfy customers is to acquire such repeat business and positive word-of-mouth, thereby improving the chances of achieving profitability (Ryu et al., 2010). Anderson and Sullivan (1993) found that a high level of customer satisfaction decreases the perceived benefits of switching service providers, which, in turn, increases customers' repurchasing intentions and loyalty.

Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) found that loyalty is a behavioural result of consumers' preferences for one brand over a selection of similar brands over a given period of time, which influences the evaluative process involved in decision-making. As a result, they suggested analysing loyalty from a twofold perspective: behavioural and attitudinal. From a behavioural perspective, Dick and Basu (1994) define loyalty as the relationship between the 'relative attitude' towards an entity (brand/store/vendor) and 'patronage behaviour'. According to De Ruyter et al. (1998), early studies of customer loyalty focused on behavioural aspects; however, more recently they have been conducted using an attitudinal approach. Oliver (1997) defined loyalty as a deeply held commitment to consistent repeat purchases of a preferred product or service in future, despite situational influence and marketing efforts.

According to Kumar and Shah (2004), customer loyalty is an important construct for all marketers in defining the means to develop relationships with customers and, hence, increase business and customer retention. Several studies have determined that high customer satisfaction and service quality result in higher customer loyalty and willingness to recommend a firm to another person (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding et al., 1993; Rust and Oliver, 1994). In contrast, Kendrick (1998) proposed a definition of loyalty including the variables of purchase frequency and amount spent per order or visit. In their study of the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, Bowen & Chen (2001) indicated that there is a positive correlation between loyal customers and profitability.

Therefore, for customers to become loyal to and profitable for a company, they must be highly satisfied. Such high levels of satisfaction moreover have the added benefit of reducing the amount of money that needs to be invested in attracting new customers, as highly satisfied customers spread positive word of mouth and recommend the service to others (Lovelock and Wright, 2002). In the fast-food industry, several authors have studied the impact of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Qin and Prybutok, 2009; Qin et al., 2010). Factors such as food taste, establishment cleanliness, service speed, and staff friendliness seem to play a major role. Two additional values that are gaining importance are price and nutritional value (Kara et al., 1995). Convenient operating hours are another significant factor for consumers.

In the context of food products, trust is closely linked to other basic marketing concepts, such as safety and perceived risk, as well as nutrition and health. Trust is also a potentially important factor in consumers' purchasing behaviour with regard to food products (Bredahl, 2001). Consumers sometimes lose their trust in the food production chain and fear that their health could be seriously compromised. It has thus been necessary to restore trust in the safety of food (Grunert, 2001).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data collection

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The questionnaire contained all the necessary information for the research. 400 personal surveys were conducted at the exit of different McDonalds and Telepizza establishments located in the city of Burgos. The restaurants were visited at different times of day and over the course of several months, so as to ensure that the data would not be seasonal.

**TABLE 1: TECHNICAL DETAILS**

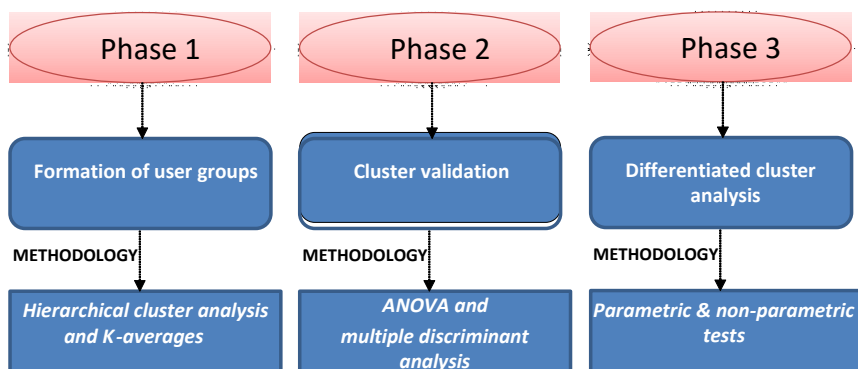
Universe	Consumers of fast-food restaurants (over the age of 18)
Sample unit	Consumer of fast-food restaurants (over the age of 18)
Data collection method	Personal questionnaire
Sample error	±4.92%
Level of trust	95%; Z = 2; P = Q = 0.50
Sample procedure	Probabilistic method
Number of surveys	400 valid surveys

#### 3.2. Analysis and results

Most marketers understand that mass marketing is an ineffective approach to meeting diverse customer needs. Grouping customers with similar requirements and buying behaviour into segments is one way to address this diversity. In so doing, marketing managers are likely to reach their target market(s) far more effectively and efficiently and, thus, to better satisfy their customers' needs. The practical importance of segmentation is reflected in the growing number of segmentation studies.

A sequential process was followed (as shown in the flow diagram in Figure 1) to meet the objectives of determining, analysing and characterising consumer groupings at FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS. First, user groups were formed through hierarchical cluster analysis and K-measures, considering the variables that Lusk and Briggeman (2009) identified as important when establishing consumer preferences for a given type of food. In a second phase, these clusters were validated by means of ANOVA and discriminant analysis. Finally, in a third phase, through parametric and non-parametric tests, the existence of inter-group differences in the variables related to satisfaction, trust, loyalty and consumer habits was confirmed.

Figure 1  
Statistical methodology



### 3.3. 1. Cluster determination

In the hierarchical cluster analysis, squared Euclidean distance was used as the measure of proximity and the Ward method as the classification algorithm. A dendrogram was thus obtained, making it possible to determine the number of clusters and the centroids so as subsequently to apply the K-means method. A total of three clusters were obtained, which were validated both by ANOVA and discriminant analysis.

The ANOVA results reflect the existence of inequality of means between the groups (see Table 2). The multiple discriminant analysis revealed the existence of differences in means between the groups of users in the test or equality of means (see Table 3). In addition, low Wilks' Lambda values were observed. The chi-square associated with the Wilks' Lambda means that the hypothesis of differences in the scores given to the independent variables between the consumer groups (see Table 4) can be accepted. Box's M test showed that the F statistic was 2.85, with a significance level of 0.0001. The null hypothesis that the variance-covariance matrices present no statistically significant differences between the groups of clients can thus be rejected and the existence of differences between groups, accepted. Finally, the confusion matrix shows that 96.8% of the originally grouped cases were correctly classified. All of the above confirms that the three clusters obtained were different and correctly identified.

Table 2

#### Mean values of the variables between groups and the ANOVA

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	ANOVA
Appearance	3.94	4.33	3.30	39.75 <sup>a</sup>
Taste	4.37	4.60	3.59	56.74 <sup>a</sup>
Price	3.99	3.75	3.14	24.96 <sup>a</sup>
Naturalness	2.04	3.95	2.61	121.74 <sup>a</sup>
Convenience	2.17	4.11	3.17	101.92 <sup>a</sup>
Nutrition	1.87	3.75	3.20	102.22 <sup>a</sup>
Origin	2.00	3.68	2.51	74.13 <sup>a</sup>
Tradition	1.85	3.94	3.39	139.84 <sup>a</sup>
Environmental impact	2.75	4.15	3.38	40.64 <sup>a</sup>
Safety	2.28	3.97	3.04	68.32 <sup>a</sup>
Fairness	1.91	4.08	2.71	73.48 <sup>a</sup>

NOTE: a = level of significance < 0.001;



Table 3

**Tests of equality of means of the groups**

Variables	Wilks' Lambda	F	Significance
Appearance	0.833	39.75	0.000
Taste	0.778	56.74	0.000
Price	0.888	24.96	0.000
Naturalness	0.620	121.74	0.000
Convenience	0.661	101.92	0.000
Nutrition	0.660	102.22	0.000
Origin	0.728	74.13	0.000
Tradition	0.587	139.84	0.000
Environmental impact	0.830	40.64	0.000
Safety	0.744	68.32	0.000
Fairness	0.730	73.48	0.000

Table 4

**Wilks' Lambda**

Contrast of the function	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-squared	Degrees of freedom	Significance
1 to 2	0.131	798.26	22	0.000
2	0.600	200.28	10	0.000

The following paragraphs offer a brief description of the groups. The clusters were formed taking the average values of the variables (Table 2):

- **GROUP 1. Utilitarian:** People in this group place importance on price paid for food. They also attach considerable value to appearance and taste (they are one of the two groups to value this more than the other two aspects). They gave the remaining attributes lower scores than the other clients. A total of 34.5% of the sample belonged to this group.
- **GROUP 2. Convenience:** This group comprises those consumers who value all aspects highly except for price. A total of 24% of the sample belonged to this group.
- **GROUP 3. Values** (the people in this group identify with a range of values related to health, the environment and social responsibility; for simplicity's sake, they will be referred to jointly here as 'values'): The members of this group are the least concerned about the price, taste and presentation of the food. They primarily value aspects related to health, the environment, and social responsibility. They attach a high value to aspects such as the use of natural products, nutrition, origin, tradition associated with the use of a product, environmental impact, the healthiness of the food, and how equitably the benefits it generates are distributed. This group accounted for the largest share of users (41.5%).

**Determination of the clusters**

Table 5 shows the differences in the three clusters' consumer habits. In general, the customers from the sample were heavy FAST FOOD RESTAURANT users: 73.5% ate at restaurants one or more times a week. However, profound differences can be seen between the groups. The utilitarian consumers were the least likely to patronise this type

of restaurant, whilst consumers in the ‘convenience’ and ‘values’ clusters ate at them several times a week or even every day. It is notable that those clients least sensitive to price (the ‘values’ group) were also the most likely to eat at fast food restaurants.

With regard to dining companions, the customers in the sample generally went to the restaurants with their friends, family or partners (82.5% in all). Some 10.25% went alone, and 7.25% went with colleagues from work. In terms of differences between the groups, those who ate with friends were mainly from the ‘utilitarian’ group, whilst those who went with their families were mainly from the ‘convenience’ and ‘values’ groups. Members of the ‘utilitarian’ group hardly went to fast food restaurants with their families at all.

No differences were observed in average per capita expenditure. The largest share of the sample spent between 6 and 11 euros per person (44.5%). The members of the ‘utilitarian’ group were the most price-sensitive and, in order to spend less, patronised restaurants less frequently.

Table 5

**Inter-group differences in consumer habits**

Variable	%	Chi-squared	Percentages by groups		
			Utilitarian	Convenience	Values
<b>Frequency of visit</b>		<b>p&lt;0.001</b>			
Less than once a month	17.25%		24.64%	7.29%	16.87%
Once a month	8.75%		16.67%	8.33%	2.41%
Once a week	25.50%		28.26%	27.08%	22.29%
Several times a week	32.00%		21.01%	38.54%	37.35%
Every day	16.50%		9.42%	18.75%	21.08%
<b>Companions</b>		<b>p=0.024</b>			
Alone	10.25%		10.14%	10.42%	10.24%
Family	20.50%		9.42%	29.17%	24.70%
Friends	37.25%		44.93%	31.25%	34.34%
Partner	24.75%		27.54%	22.92%	23.49%
Colleagues	7.25%		7.97%	6.25%	7.23%
<b>Expenditure per person</b>		<b>p=0.258</b>			
Less than 6 euros	21.50%		23.91%	18.75%	21.08%
From 6 to 11 euros	44.50%		46.38%	46.88%	41.57%
From 12 to 17 euros	24.50%		24.64%	26.04%	23.49%
Over 17 euros	9.50%		5.07%	8.33%	13.86%

With regard to satisfaction, as can be seen in Table 6, customers were generally satisfied with the food at the restaurant and with the establishment itself (score of more than 3 on a scale of 1 to 5). The most satisfied clients were those from the ‘convenience’ group (score of approximately 4), whilst the least satisfied were those from the ‘values’ group.

As for trust, the data were generally similar to those on satisfaction (with scores of over 3 points). Inter-group differences were mainly found in customers from the ‘convenience’ group, who maintained a very strong trust in the restaurant (score of around 4). An ANOVA and a Mann-Whitney U test were performed on the ‘utilitarian’ and ‘values’ groups to establish whether there were differences between the two clusters. Statistically significant differences were found for only three variables, in both the ANOVA and the Mann-Whitney U test: the establishment’s honesty, the qualifications of its employees, and its technical resources. The ‘values’ group consistently gave higher scores to the first two variables.

In terms of loyalty, there was a notable decline in the general scores for aspects related to meals away from home eaten at the restaurant, recommending the restaurant, and considering it the best option (close to 2.7). The highest scores were again found amongst customers from the ‘convenience’ group, whilst the lowest scores were found amongst the ‘values’ group.

Figure 6

**Inter-group differences in satisfaction, trust and loyalty**

Variable	Mean	ANOVA / H- Kruskal – Wallis	Average values for groups		
			Utilitarian	Convenience	Values
<b>Satisfaction with the food</b>					
The food met my expectations	3.78	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.94	4.07	3.48
The food was satisfactory	3.76	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.75	4.22	3.50
Satisfaction with the food prepared in this establishment	3.69	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.84	4.15	3.31
<b>Satisfaction with the establishment</b>					
Good choice of establishment	3.57	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.69	3.89	3.28
Total satisfaction with this establishment	3.74	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.75	4.23	3.44
Total satisfaction compared to other restaurants	3.39	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.37	3.93	3.10
<b>Trust</b>					
The establishment keeps its promises	3.54	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.36	4.10	3.35
Truthfulness of the information provided by the establishment	3.53	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.38	4.09	3.33
Honesty of the establishment	3.51	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.18	4.13	3.43
Trust in the establishment’s intentions	3.52	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.27	4.07	3.42
Sincere and honest information	3.46	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.21	4.15	3.27
Professionalism of the establishment	3.61	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.46	4.11	3.45
Technical resources of the establishment	3.57	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.57	3.96	3.33
Qualifications of the workers	3.46	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.12	3.91	3.48
Concern for client satisfaction	3.68	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.49	4.17	3.56
Proper treatment received	3.76	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.64	4.15	3.63
Ease of obtaining information from the establishment	3.54	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.27	4.13	3.42
<b>Loyalty</b>					
Meals outside the home are consumed at this establishment	2.71	p<0.001 p<0.001	2.70	3.13	2.48
Likelihood to recommend the establishment	2.83	p<0.001 p<0.001	2.91	3.36	2.45
Best option for food away from home	2.78	p<0.001 p<0.001	2.75	3.30	2.51
Regular visits to this establishment	3.64	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.71	3.95	3.40
Regular business with the establishment	3.54	p<0.001 p<0.001	3.45	3.96	3.36

Note: Scale of 0 to 5.

#### **4. Conclusions**

With the aim at understanding consumers' behavior at fast-food restaurants, this study assessed the relevance attained by these consumers to the food values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009). And the results corroborated the importance of designing differentiated strategies for diverse consumers segments in specific markets such as the restaurant market and, more specifically, the fast-food market.

More specifically, the Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011) scales were used to test for certain food values that are generally the most highly valued by consumers, namely: appearance and safety of the food. Customers are seeking to enjoy an experience (Parasuraman et al., 1988), in terms of both tangible and intangible aspects. How well this need is met is reflected in the degree of satisfaction obtained from both the food and the restaurant itself, as these are the attributes that customers value most highly. In this regard, from a business standpoint, one aspect that fast food restaurant managers should take into account is that the price a customer pays for a product should influence neither its presentation nor any other attributes thereof.

There is moreover a gap in the market for an fast food restaurant targeting consumers who are concerned about health, the environment and social responsibility. These consumers would like to go to an fast food restaurant focused on all of these values. In this sense, the advertising campaigns for these types of restaurants may not be yielding optimum results if they focus solely on how the restaurant offers healthy food and cares about health.

This research has also corroborated findings from previous studies regarding the importance of trust in the delivery of the service, particularly for those consumers who go to these restaurants out of convenience, with little differentiation between the other two segments. From a business perspective, this suggests that restaurants should undertake specific actions to increase trust. These actions could include the provision of more information on calories and nutritional values, as that is where the greatest informational asymmetries have been identified.

Finally, one important finding is that customer satisfaction does not contribute in any meaningful way to customer loyalty. Indeed, consumers concerned about health, the environment and social responsibility were the least loyal, and yet 58.43% of them frequent this type of fast food restaurant several times a week or more. This finding is in keeping with Carpenter (2008), which established that consumer behaviour may be repeated out of necessity. The high frequency with which a customer buys a product may be due more to a lack of appealing alternatives than to an attitude of loyalty (Hobbs and Rowley, 2008). In other words, in the context of this research, they may be patronising the restaurant without any true loyalty to the brand based on affect or loyalty intention (Oliver, 1999).

These may represent a compelling opportunity for companies in the industry, which should thus work to develop or increase production and distribution practice initiatives related to these aspects.

#### **Funding**

This research was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Research (Project reference: ECO2014-59688-R, Programa Estatal de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica y Técnica y de Innovación 2013–2016).

## Referencias bibliográficas

- Abdullah, F; Zainoren, A. and Hamali, J. (2011) “Managing customer preference for foodservice industry”. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, Vol. 6, nº 6, December, pgs. 525-533
- Anderson, E.W. and Fornell, C. (2000), “Foundations of the American customer satisfaction index”, *Total Quality Management*, Vol. 1 nº. 7, pgs 869-83.
- Anderson, E.W. and Sullivan, M.W (1993). “The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms”, *Marketing Science*, Vol. 12, nº 99. 125-43
- Bareham, J. (1995). *Consumer Behavior in the Food Industry. A European Perspective*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, U.K.
- Beardsworth, A., Brynan, A., Keil, T., Goode, J., Haslam, C. and Lancashire, E. (2002), “Women, men and food: the significance of gender for nutritional attitudes and choices”, *British Food Journal*, Vol. 104 nº. 7, pgs 470-91.
- Becker-Suttle, C.B., Weaver, P.M. and Crawford-Welch, S. (1994), “A pilot study utilizing conjoint analysis in the comparison of age-based segmentation strategies in the full service restaurant market”, *Journal of Restaurant & Foodservice Marketing*, Vol. 1 nº 2, pgs 71-91.
- Bharath, J. and Foster, Ch. (2009). “Nutritional information on restaurant menus. Who cares and why restaurateurs should bother”, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 21, nº 7, pgs 876-891
- Bilharz, M. and Schmitt, K. (2011), “Going big with big matters: the key points approach to sustainable consumption”, *Gaia*, Vol. 20 nº. 4, pgs 232-235.
- Bolton, R. N., and Drew, J. H. (1991). “A longitudinal analysis of the impact of service changes on customer attitudes”. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 55 nº 1, pgs1-9.
- Boulding, W., Kalra, A., Staelin, R., and Zeithaml, V. A. (1993). “A Dynamic Process Model of Service Quality: From Expectations to Behavioral Intentions”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 30 (February), pgs 7-27.
- Bowen, J. T., and Chen, S.-L. (2001). “The relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction”, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 15 nº 4, pgs213-217.
- Bowman, S. A., Gortmaker, S. L.; Ebbeling, C. B. ; Pereira, Mark A.; and Ludwig, D. S. (2004). Effects of Fast-Food Consumption on Energy Intake and Diet Quality Among Children in a National Household Survey, *Pediatrics* Vol. 113 nº. 1 January 2004
- Bredahl, L. (2001). “Determinants of consumer attitudes and purchase intentions with regard to genetically modified foods – results of a cross-national survey”, *Journal of Consumer Policy*, Vol. 24, nº 1, pgs 23-61.
- Brown, K., McIlveen, H. and Strugnell, C. (2000), “Nutritional awareness and food preferences of young consumers”, *Nutrition & Food Science*, Vol. 30 nº. 5, pgs 230-5.
- Bryant, R. and Dundes, L. (2008). “Fast food perceptions: a pilot study of college students in Spain and the United States”, *Appetite* Vol.51, pgs 327-330.
- Buttle, F. (1986.) *Hotel and Food Service Marketing – A Managerial Approach*, pgs 76–191, Cassell Educational, London, England.
- Carey, R.A. and Genevieve, L. (1995). USA snapshots: Factors influencing choice of sit-down restaurant. *USA Today*, June 23, p. D1.
- Currie, J., DellaVigna, S., Moretti, E. and Vikram Pathania (2010). “The Effect of Fast Food Restaurants on Obesity and Weight Gain”, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 2 (August): 32–63.

- De Ruyter, K., Wetzels, M. and Bloemer, J. (1998), "On the relationship between perceived service quality, service loyalty and switching costs". *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 9, n° 5, pgs. 436-453.
- Dick, A. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 22, n° 2, pgs. 99-113.
- French, S. and Rogers, G. (2010), "Understanding the LOHAS consumer: the rise of ethical consumerism", available at: <http://www.lohas.com/Lohas-Consumer> (accessed 8 November 2015).
- Grunert, K.G. (2001). Færdigfødning af slagtekøer: Rapport fra en forbrugerundersøgelse, MAPP project paper, The Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus.
- Iglesias, M.P. and Guillen, M.J. Y. (2004). "Perceived quality and price: their impact on the satisfaction of restaurant customers", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 16, n° 6, pgs., 373-379
- Islam, N.; Ullah, G.M. Shafayer (2010) "Factors affecting Consumers' preferences on fast food items in Bangladesh. *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, July/August, Vol. 26 n° 4, pgs 131-146
- Jacoby, J. and Chesnut, R.W. (1978). *Brand Loyalty Measurement and Management*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.
- Johns, N., and A. Howard. (1998). "Customer expectations versus perceptions of service performance in the foodservice industry", *International Journal of Service Industry Management* Vol. 9, n° 3, pgs 248-256.
- Kara, A.; Kaynak, E and Kucukemiroglu, O. (1997) "Marketing strategies for fast-food restaurants: a customer view", *British Food Journal* Vol. 99, n° 9 pgs: 318-324
- Kara, A.; Kaynak, E. and Kucukemiroglu, O. (1995). "Marketing strategies for fast-food restaurants: a customer view". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 7, n° 4, pgs. 16-22.
- Kendrick, A. (1998). "Promotional products vs price promotion in fostering customer loyalty: a report of two controlled field experiments". *The Journal of Service Marketing*, Vol 12, n° 4, pgs. 312-326.
- Kivela, J. (1997). "Restaurant marketing: selection and segmentation in Hong Kong" *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 9 N°. 3, pgs 116-23.
- Kivela, J., J. Reece, and R. Inbakaran. (1999). "Consumer research in the restaurant environment, Part 2: A conceptual model of dining satisfaction and return patronage." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* Vol. 11, n°. 6, pgs 269-286.
- Kivela, J., R. Inbakaran, and J. Reece. (1999). "Consumer research in the restaurant environment, Part 1: A conceptual model of dining satisfaction and return patronage." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* Vol. 11, n°. 5, pgs 205-222.
- Koo, L.C., Tao, F. and Yeung, J. (1999), "Preferential segmentation of restaurant attributes through conjoint analysis", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 11 n° 5, pgs 242-53.
- Korzen, S., Sandøe, P., & Larsen, J. (2011). "Pure meat—Public perceptions of risk reduction strategies in meat production", *Food Policy*, Vol. 36, n° 2, pgs. 158-165.
- Kumar, V., and Shah, D. (2004). Building and sustaining profitable customer loyalty for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 80 n° 4, pgs 317-329.
- Law, A. K. Y., Y. V. Hui, and X. Zhao. (2004). Modeling repurchase frequency and customer satisfaction for fast food outlets. *The International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, Vol. 21, n°. 5, pgs. 545-563.

- Lovelock, C. and Wright, L. (2002), "Service Marketing and Management. loyalty and switching costs", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 9, n° 5, pgs. 436-53.
- Luck , J.I.L. (2011). "External validity of the food values scale". *Food Quality and Preference*, Vol. 22 n° 5, pgs. 452-462
- Lusk, J.L., Briggeman, B.C. (2009). "Food Values". *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 91, n° 1, pgs. 184– 196.
- Malave, R. and Baldwin, W. (2014). "Assessing quality of food, service and customer experience at a restaurant: the case of a student run restaurant in the USA", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol 14, n° 1, pgs 49-73
- Manaktola, K. and Jauhari, V. (2007), "Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 19 n°. 5, pgs 364-377.
- Martens, L. (1997), "Gender and the eating out experience", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 99 , n° 1, pgs. 20-6.
- McMahon, A.T., Williams, P. and Tapsell, L. (2010), "Reviewing the meanings of wellness and well-being and their implications for food choice", *Perspectives in Public Health*, Vol. 130 n°. 6, pgs. 282-286.
- Moorman, C., Deshpande', R. and Zaltman, G. (1993), "Factors affecting trust in market research relationship", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 N°. 1, pgs 81-101.
- Morgan, M.J., Attaway, J.A. and Griffin, M. (1996), "The role of product/service experience in the satisfaction formation process: a test of moderation", *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, Vol. 9, pgs 104-14.
- Morgan, R. and Hunt, S. (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58, July, pgs 20-38.
- Oakes, M.E. and Slotterback, C. S. (2002). "The good, the bad, and the ugly: characteristics used by young, middle-aged, and older men and women, dieters and non-dieters to judge healthfulness of foods", *Appetite*, Vol. 38, pgs 91-97.
- Oliver, R. L. (1997). *Customer Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*. New York, NY: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Oliver, R.L. (1977). "Effect of expectation and disconfirmation on post-exposure product evaluations: an alternative interpretation", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 62, August, pgs 480-6.
- Oliver, R.L. (1980), "A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 17, September, pgs 460-9.
- Oliver, R.L. (1997). "Loyalty and profit: long-term effect of satisfaction", in Oliver, R. (Ed.), *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., and Berry, L. L. (1985). "A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.49, pgs.41–50.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1988), "SERVQUAL: a multiple item score for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, Spring, pgs 12-40.
- Park, C. (2004) "Efficient or Enjoyable ? Consumer Values of Eating-out and Fast Food Restaurant Consumption in Korea". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 23, pgs. 87-94.
- Qin, H., Prybutok, R. V. (2008). "Determinants of Customer-Perceived Service Quality in Fast-Food Restaurants and Their Relationship to Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions. *Quality Management Journal*. Vol. 15, pgs. 35-50.

- Qin, H. and Prybutok, V.P. (2009). "Determinants of customer-perceived service quality in fast-food restaurants and their relationship to customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions" *The Quality Management Journal*, Vol. 15 n° 2, pgs 35-50.
- Qin, H. and Prybutok, V.P. (2009). "Service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in fast-food restaurants", *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, Vol. 1, n° 1, pgs 78-95
- Qin, H.; Prybutok, V.P. and Zhao, Q. (2010). "Perceived service quality in fast-food restaurants: empirical evidence from China", *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, Vol. 27, n° 4, pgs 424-437.
- Ribeiro Soriano, D. (2002). "Consumers' expectations factors in restaurants. The situation in Spain". *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, Vol 19, n° 8/9, pgs 1055-1067.
- Rozin, P. (2005). "Meaning of 'natural': Process more important than content. *Psychological Science*, Vol. 16, pgs. 652-658.
- Rust, R. T., and Oliver, R. L. (1994). *Service Quality. Insights and Managerial Implications from the Frontier*. London: SAGE.
- Ruyter, K., Wetzels, M., and Bloemer, J. (1998). "On the relationship between perceived service quality, service loyalty and switching costs", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol.9, N°. 5, pgs.436-453;
- Ryu, K; Han, H. and Jang, S. (2010). "Relationships among hedonic and utilitarian values, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the fast-casual restaurant industry", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 22, n° 3, pgs 416-432.
- Schröder, M. and McEachern, M.G. (2005). Fast foods and ethical consumer value: a focus on McDonald's and KFC, *British Food Journal*, Vol. 107, n° 4/5, pgs 212-224.
- Shank, D.M. and Nahhas, F. (1994), "Understanding the service requirements of the mature market", *Journal of Restaurant and Foodservice Marketing*, Vol. 1 N°. 2, pgs 23-43.
- Schroder, M. J. A. & McEachern, M. G. (2005). Fast-foods and ethical consumer value: a focus on McDonald's and KFC. *British Food Journal*, 107(4), 212-224, doi:10.1108/00070700510589503.
- Tong, C. and Wong, A. (2016). The Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility of Fast-food Restaurants on Corporate Reputation. *Journal of Marketing and HR*, 3 (1), 126-144.
- Tse, A.C.B (2001). "How Much More Are Consumers Willing To Pay For A Higher Level of Service? A Preliminary Survey", *Journal of Service Marketing*, Vol. 15, n° 1, pgs. 11-17,
- Williams, A.J., DeMicco, J.F. and Kotschevar, L. (1997), "The challenges that face restaurants in attracting and meeting the needs of the mature customer", *Journal of Restaurant and Foodservice Marketing*, Vol. 2 N°. 4, pgs 49-62.
- Wood, R. (1990), "Sociology, gender and food consumption and the hospitality industry", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 92 N°. 6, pgs 3-5. York, NY.
- Worsley, A. and Lea, E. (2008). Consumer concerns about food and health. Examination of general and specific relationships with personal values and demographics. *British Food Journal*, Vol. 110, n° 11, pp. 1106-1118
- Xu, Y. (2014). Understanding CSR from the perspective of Chinese diners: the case of McDonald's, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. 26(6), 1002-1020
- Zeithaml, V. A, L. L. Berry, and A. Parasuraman. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of Marketing* Vol. 60, n° 2: 31-46.



Zopiatis, A. and Pribic, J. (2007). College students' dining expectations in Cyprus, *British Food Journal*, Vol. 109, n° 10, pgs 765-776.