

YOU ARE WHAT YOU PERCEIVE AND EAT

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Abstract: *Food industry is notorious for its ignorance of care and well-being of consumers. Since contemporary consumers lead a very fast type of life, they have scarce time to stop and think when they buy food.*

In this research we have investigated if consumers chose specific words when they buy food. As expected, people have preferred the ones with specific names, such as local, fresh and organic.

Key words: *Behavioural Economics, Behavioural Tourism, Food Preferences, Restaurant*

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern or basically Capitalistic life style force us to live faster. Usually we have no time for detailed think for daily decisions and some of them are related with food choices. If we do not reflect up when we chose our food, we can make bad and wrong decisions. Behavioral Economics search and try to explain the factors which effect our decision processes and draw a framework.

What kind of factors have an effect on our food choices? First thing come to mind is price, accessibility to market, being trendy food, advertisements, quality and culture. We can add more factors such as "...labelled health, mood, convenience, sensory appeal, natural content, price, weight control, familiarity and ethical concern..." [1]. Of course, there could be many factors which affect our food choice decision but psychological factors are the most interesting one. For example, many people try to buy the reddest and the best shaped apples in produce section of super market or greengrocer. However conscious consumers prefer bad shaped and maggoty apples. First group think that the best shaped and the reddest apples are the best and do not consider being the reddest could come from chemicals. To choose the reddest apples is not a random behaviour. Its origin comes from evolution [2]. have searched food colour and human trichromatic vision in food evaluation. The researchers report that "...evaluation of perceived calorie content and arousal in humans are biased by colour has received comparatively less attention. Arousal positively co-varied with red-brightness, while green-brightness was negatively associated with arousal and perceived calorie content...". On the other hand, it has been found evidence that high-caloric pictures compared to low-caloric pictures led to increased activity in food processing and reward related areas [3]. Food colour,

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calories, availability and consumer choices were searched well in the literature [4], [5], [6] and et all.

We characterize and make judgements about the people around us with their eating habits. For example, some cultures use more various spices than the other cultures or some people are vegan. Food choice differs from not just culture to culture but also nation to nation and GDP. For example, [7](Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006)(Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006)(Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006)(Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006) report that ethical motives such as being human and animal rights supporter and political motives have positive effect on food choice while religion not. If this research repeated in a Muslim country such as Turkey, the results are likely to be different.

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Some people believe that “functional foods” (For example: Enriched yogurt) are more healthy than traditional one. (Ares & Gámbaro, 2007) [8] have searched functional food choice of Uruguayan consumers and carrier. The researchers report that certain carriers perceive functional foods as healthier.

Sometimes people think fast when they buy food and do not think in dept. Advertisement sector knows it well and use. Thinking and taking decisions fast are not just because of Capitalistic life style but also nature of human. (Kahneman Daniel, 2012) who is Nobel Economy Prize Winner has explained it with System I and System II in his famous book namely Thinking Fast and Slow. Regarding the book, people think and decide fast when take decisions especially for daily routines. On the other hand, easily pronounced and/or familiar words evoke a favourable attitude [10] and [11]. Design of the dining table, colour of the restaurant, music even size of the spoons and dishes affect our dietary habit. For example, big spoons and dishes cause us to serve ourselves more because they make the food look so small [12].

People tend to think positive some words which related love such as mother love, daughter or son love and love of wife. In marketing there is a magic word which is loved by almost everybody: Free or it's derivatives buy one get one. (Ariely, 2013)[13] explains this in his book with cholate example. Sometimes some believes or perceptions also affect our food choice. For example, we believe that village produced eggs are healthier, because we accept chickens are being feed naturally. We do not think chickens' life conditions who live in a hencoop in the village could be exactly same with industrial ones. So, when we see or hear some words such as “natural”, “fresh” etc. we tend to accept that that goods are more precious and tend to choose them.

We wonder if there are some magical words in Turkish restaurants. The research is organized as follows: After introduction, next sections be assigned data and methodology and empirical results while last section is results.

II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Participants

Questionnaires were completed by Turkish citizens. Turkish citizens were chosen in order to research if Turkish culture has an effect on food choice. The participants filled out the questionnaire over the internet. The total sample of 165 participants (N=165) included 64 men (38.7%) and 101 women (61.2%). In Turkish cuisine culture veganism is not common and firstly lamb meat is preferred while second is beef. Because of that lamb meat has higher price than beef.

Questionnaire and data collection

Data has been collected by a questionnaire. The questionnaire covers Turkish food photographs and brief menu contents. The questionnaire covers seven questions which first four questions directed food choice while last three questions related with socio-demographics (gender, age and education).

Our research question is if there are some magic words at food choices? To research this, we have created a dummy restaurant menu and add food pictures and brief names with brief descriptions (contents). In names we add some specific words which could be perceived as magic words such as local names, buy one get one and organic certified. Then we asked to chose two of foods and soups in pictures from the menu. We used five pictures for both questions.

Table 1 gives brief information about the sample:

Table 1. Description of the sample

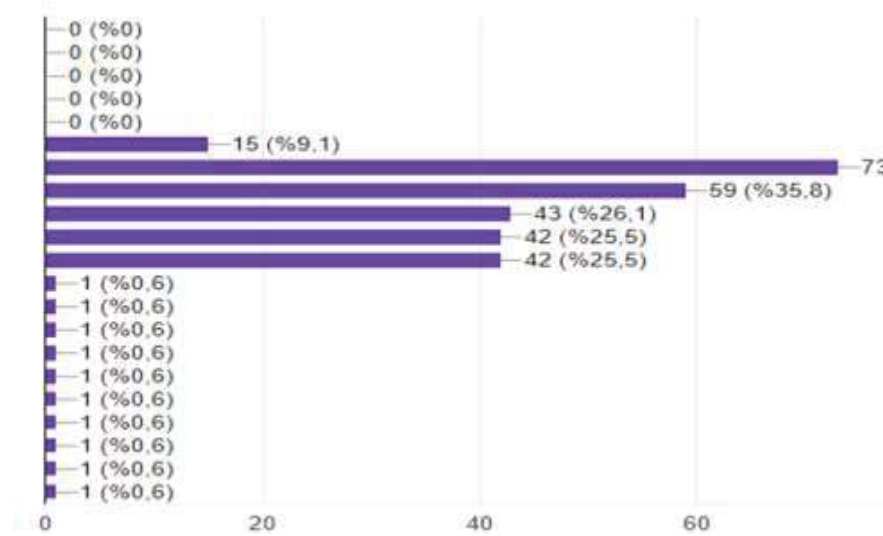
Total Sample	Count	%
GENDER		
Women	101	61.2
Men	64	38.8
AGE		
18-25	84	50.9
26-30	24	14.5
31-35	21	12.7
36-40	6	3.6
41-45	10	6.1
46-50	12	7.3
51-55	5	3.0
56-60	3	1.8
61 >	0	0
EDUCATION		
Primary School	3	1.8
Secondary School	2	1.2
High School	43	26.1
Vocational School	18	10.9
Faculty	68	41.2
Master/PhD	31	18.8

As it could be seen in Table 1, women respondents were dominated the sample (61.2%). Majority of the respondents are young (65.4%) and well educated (60.0%). Because women dominate the results, it could be expected that “health” or health evoke words be more chosen by women than men respondents.

III. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

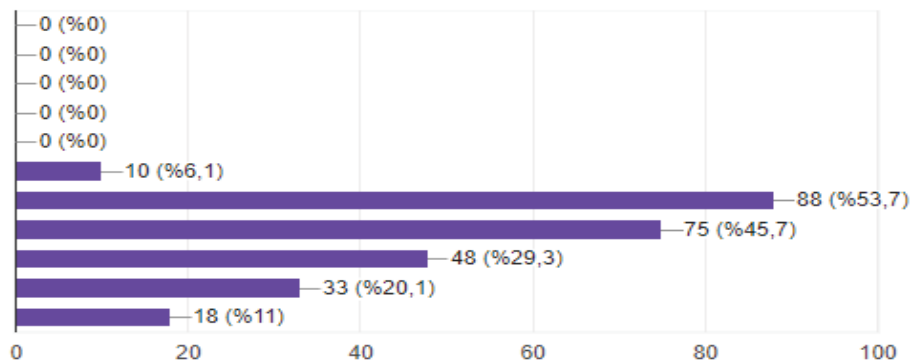
Including invalid (6) and vegetarians (15) responses we have had 165 responses. The most chosen pictures are “Organic certified farm meat” 73 (44.2) and “local meat” 59 (35.8%). Majority of the respondents 107 (64.8%) choices were affected by the foods contents (descriptions).

Graphic 1. Food Choice



We tested same situation with last two questions for soup names. The most chosen picture is “From the Ida Mountain’s Summit” 88 (53.7%). Second most chosen picture is “Aunt Bahriye Soup” 75 (45.7%).

Graphic 2. Soup Choice



The reason of preference is same with the first question: Contents of the pictures (125 respondents, 75.8%).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We can say Turkish food sector is biased by specific words. These are: “Local”, “Organic certified” and local names such as Ida Mountain and Aunt Bahriye. The results have had similarity with [14] research which report sensory appeal, health, convenience and price are the most important factors at food choice.

In our research one of magic word is “organic certified” which evokes healthy food. However, our results do not confirm [15] (Hou, Yang, & Sun, 2017)(Hou, Yang, & Sun, 2017)(Hou, Yang, & Sun, 2017)(Hou, Yang, & Sun, 2017) results which report that “...consumers exhibit more favourable attitudes and behavioural outcomes when provided with common descriptive food names with pictures...”. In our results we can claim that consumers prefer specific food names and give priority them than pictures of them.

On the other hand, nutrition labelling could also affect consumer behaviour such as “...beef labelled 75% lean has more favourable opinion rather than 25% fat...”[16]. This claim is also supporting our results which we found some words are more effective than others. For example, From the Ida Mountain’s Summit soup name is being most preferred soup.

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