

# **Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha**

## **Tesis Doctoral**

**Doctorado en Economía y Empresa**



### **Análisis del comportamiento post-compra del consumidor en la industria de la alimentación: Un enfoque basado en los valores de los alimentos**

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**Carmen María Gómez Cantó**





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## Resumen

Para comprender las decisiones de compra de los consumidores en relación con los alimentos, es necesario examinar, entre otros aspectos, la influencia que ejercen las variables relacionadas con los propios alimentos en tales procesos de elección. Por este motivo, a partir de los atributos de los alimentos tradicionalmente identificados en campos del comportamiento del consumidor, así como en la ciencia y tecnología de los alimentos, en esta Tesis Doctoral se ha prestado especial atención a la nueva clasificación de *valores de los alimentos*, concepto que fue propuesto inicialmente por Lusk y Briggeman (2009). La identificación y posterior análisis de este concepto ha permitido profundizar en mayor medida en el estudio del comportamiento que el consumidor muestra en relación con sus compras de alimentación, tanto en establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo como en el ámbito de la restauración (más específicamente, en los establecimientos de comida rápida). Por otra parte, este trabajo también ha tratado de observar la influencia que ejercen dichos valores de los alimentos en variables clave de resultados no financieros del marketing, como son la satisfacción, la confianza, los costes de cambio y la lealtad del consumidor. Y ello, con el fin de facilitar a los operadores de la industria de alimentación el diseño de estrategias que garanticen su competitividad y supervivencia a largo plazo en un sector tan competitivo.

En este sentido, a lo largo de este trabajo, en el capítulo 2 (Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó, 2016) y capítulo 3 (Gómez-Cantó, Martínez-Ruiz e Izquierdo-Yusta, 2018), se ha observado cómo el interés fundamental de los consumidores ha pasado de los atributos de los alimentos a los valores de los alimentos, siendo generalmente los valores hedónicos (e.g. sabor y apariencia) y utilitarios (e.g. precio) los más importantes para los consumidores, en detrimento de aquellos valores relacionados con la equidad, el origen del producto o el impacto medioambiental, que constituyen aspectos muy destacados en la actualidad (Gómez-Cantó, Martínez-Ruiz e Izquierdo-Yusta, 2018). Sin embargo, esta valoración es susceptible de cambiar según el segmento de consumidores considerado. Por ello, y en relación a los restaurantes de comida rápida, los

resultados obtenidos en el capítulo 4 de esta tesis (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2018), dieron la oportunidad de agrupar a los consumidores en tres clústers diferentes en función de sus evaluaciones de los valores de los alimentos. Dichos clústers no solo difieren en cuanto a las mencionadas valoraciones, sino también respecto a los hábitos de consumo y a variables clave como la satisfacción, confianza y lealtad.

En función de los anteriores resultados, reflejados en el capítulo 4 y vinculados al sector de la restauración, con el objetivo de profundizar en el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor abarcando diversos ámbitos de la industria alimentaria, se consideró interesante analizar en profundidad a lo largo del capítulo 5 (Izquierdo-Yusta, en prensa) la importancia que ejercen los valores de los alimentos en el proceso posterior a la compra, llevando a cabo este análisis en establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo. Por tanto, en el capítulo 5 se ha analizado la influencia que ejercen los valores de los alimentos en la satisfacción tanto con las compras como con el establecimiento minorista en el que se llevan a cabo, así como los costes de cambio y lealtad hacia el mismo. Los resultados de este estudio han hecho posible confirmar la influencia que ejercen los valores de los alimentos en la satisfacción del consumidor, la cual a su vez influye positivamente en la lealtad. Sin embargo, se ha comprobado que los costes de cambio no moderan dicha relación, lo que deja entrever que muchas veces la lealtad de los consumidores es una lealtad espuria.

En consecuencia, el estudio llevado a cabo a lo largo de los cuatro artículos que componen esta Tesis Doctoral ha permitido identificar las influencias externas que determinan el comportamiento de compra y consumo de las personas respecto a los productos de alimentación, y que afectan de manera directa a su satisfacción, confianza, lealtad y costes de cambio en dos sectores muy importantes de la industria alimentaria, la restauración y la venta minorista de productos de alimentación.

## **Capítulo 1. Introducción**



## 1.1. Introducción

A lo largo de las últimas décadas se han podido observar una serie de cambios en los hábitos y comportamientos de compra de los consumidores a la hora de adquirir productos de alimentación (Pieniak et al., 2010; De Moura et al., 2012; Deloitte, 2015). Prueba de ello es que, hasta hace unos años, a la hora de elegir un determinado producto de alimentación, los consumidores no barajaban cuestiones relacionadas con las buenas prácticas agrícolas, la inocuidad de los alimentos durante el proceso de producción, la calidad nutricional o la facilidad con la que el producto podía prepararse y consumirse (Berné y Martínez, 2007). Sin embargo, hoy en día, los compradores tienen más información sobre estos aspectos y se han vuelto más exigentes a la hora de elegir los alimentos que desean consumir. Y a esto se suma que, a la hora de llevar a cabo sus compras de alimentos se enfrentan a posibilidades ilimitadas de elección en términos de variedad de productos con muy diversas características o atributos entre los que elegir (Lister et al., 2014). Por lo tanto, se ha convertido en un aspecto fundamental conocer el valor que los consumidores atribuyen a esos atributos, así como la forma en que los tienen en cuenta en el proceso de decisión de compra.

Numerosos estudios han advertido de la existencia de un amplio abanico de factores potencialmente implicados en el comportamiento de compra y consumo de alimentos y, por tanto, en el proceso de elección de los mismos (Steptoe, Pollard y Wardle, 1995; Furst et al., 1996, Asp, 1999). Estos factores engloban desde los hábitos y las propiedades intrínsecas y extrínsecas de los propios productos (Garber et al., 2003), como atributos sensoriales de la comida e información que figura en el envase (King et al., 2004), hasta aspectos culturales, del contexto y la interacción social (Steptoe et al., 1995), estilos de vida (Grunert, 1993), y los propios valores personales de los consumidores (Gutman, 1982).

Además de todos los factores potencialmente implicados en la elección de alimentos, hay que añadir la complejidad de la investigación sobre el consumo, la cual es particularmente difícil en el ámbito de la alimentación, debido a la compleja naturaleza de este tipo de productos y a los estímulos en los puntos de venta y durante el consumo (Garber et al., 2003). No obstante, en la actualidad la elección de alimentos sigue siendo un tema que aún no se ha comprendido en profundidad.

Por ello, entender la toma de decisiones respecto a la elección de alimentos, conocer cómo evalúan los consumidores las diferentes características de los mismos y, en definitiva, tratar de analizar qué variables relacionadas con los propios alimentos ejercen la mayor influencia en el comportamiento del consumidor se ha convertido hoy en día en un gran desafío (Logue, 2015).

Partiendo de esta línea, esta Tesis Doctoral tiene como objetivo profundizar en el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor en su proceso de elección de productos del sector de la alimentación, teniendo en cuenta la escala de valores de los alimentos de Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y las variables clave de marketing de carácter no financiero.

A continuación, se hará una breve introducción de cada uno de los artículos que componen esta Tesis Doctoral.

En el primer artículo de este trabajo, de Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó (2016) (capítulo 2), se ofrece una revisión de las variables de los alimentos que la literatura ha calificado como influencias externas clave más importantes, y que nos permiten comprender en mayor medida el comportamiento de compra de los consumidores respecto a los alimentos. A lo largo del tiempo, numerosos estudios han tratado de medir las preferencias de los consumidores por determinados atributos de los alimentos (Lusk y Briggeman, 2009; Lusk, 2011), caracterizándose dichos atributos por ser casi siempre objetivamente medibles y cuantificables como el precio, sin embargo, la literatura más reciente ha empezado a incluir atributos más abstractos y subjetivos para tratar de explicar el comportamiento de compra de los consumidores en relación a los alimentos (Kotler y Keller, 2012).

Asimismo, una investigación reciente de Deloitte (2015) confirmó la creciente importancia de los atributos relacionados con la salud en las decisiones de compra, señalando que el sabor, el precio y la conveniencia ya no son los únicos factores que impulsan la compra de alimentos y bebidas por parte de los consumidores. Este estudio reveló que, además de estos factores tradicionales, los consumidores cada vez más ven influenciadas sus decisiones de compra por factores como la salud y el bienestar, la seguridad, el impacto social, y la experiencia y transparencia.

Partiendo de esta línea, y especialmente a partir del trabajo de Lusk y Briggeman (2009), se ha ido más allá de los atributos de los alimentos tradicionalmente considerados por la literatura para tratar de explicar las decisiones de los consumidores. Estos autores, a partir de una profunda revisión de la literatura relacionada con las preferencias alimentarias y los valores humanos, propusieron una clasificación de once valores de los alimentos capaces de explicar las decisiones de compra y consumo de los consumidores en el campo de la alimentación. Y ello, partiendo del valor que los consumidores atribuyen a

esos atributos, dado que son capaces de diferenciar los diferentes atributos de los alimentos según sus valores personales (Gutman, 1982). Por ello, podemos entender que los consumidores prefieren un producto en particular sobre otro de acuerdo a sus valores alimentarios más importantes.

Cabe destacar que, los mencionados valores de los alimentos están estrechamente relacionados con la era del marketing 3.0, un nuevo enfoque impulsado por los valores, y que pone de relieve la necesidad de atender a los clientes no como meros consumidores sino como seres humanos complejos y multidimensionales con mente, corazones y espíritu (Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó, 2016). Bajo esta filosofía, los clientes eligen aquellas empresas y productos que satisfacen sus necesidades más profundas como las relacionadas con la justicia económica, social y medioambiental (Kotler, Kartajaya y Setiawan, 2010).

En consecuencia, y bajo este nuevo enfoque de marketing, es preciso tener en cuenta el nuevo perfil del consumidor y el nuevo entorno de compra y consumo en que las tendencias sociales, éticas y económicas emergentes cada vez están adquiriendo una mayor importancia. Por ello, a la hora de analizar el comportamiento de compra de los consumidores respecto a los productos de alimentación, se deben considerar todos los aspectos que emergen del marketing 3.0, y en este sentido, Lusk y Briggeman (2009) fueron los pioneros en considerarlos, y en determinar una serie de valores que, hoy en día, representan las principales influencias que determinan la elección de alimentos, y además, son lo suficientemente amplios como para abarcar toda la gama de cuestiones que tienden a orientar las decisiones de los consumidores con respecto a sus compras de alimentos.

Por lo tanto, en este primer artículo se ha podido observar cómo la escala de valores de los alimentos propuesta por Lusk y Briggeman (2009) es coherente con la evolución de los distintos tipos de marketing, y en concreto con el enfoque del marketing 3.0, y ha permitido esclarecer el comportamiento de compra de los consumidores, quienes basan sus elecciones en atributos más abstractos y subjetivos estrechamente relacionados con los valores de las personas, y no en meros atributos físicos de los alimentos exclusivamente medibles y cuantificables.

El primer artículo (Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó, 2016) reflejado en el capítulo 2 de esta Tesis Doctoral ha permitido sentar las bases para desarrollar el segundo trabajo. De este modo, partiendo del concepto de valores de los alimentos identificados por Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y validados por Lusk (2011), en el capítulo 3 se ha analizado empíricamente la forma en que los consumidores evalúan dichos valores. Específicamente, este estudio reflejado en el capítulo 3 (Gómez-Cantó, Martínez-Ruiz e Izquierdo-Yusta, 2018), se ha focalizado en

establecimientos minoristas de alimentación, centrándose en el análisis de una muestra de 708 consumidores de la ciudad de Albacete que había sido recogida mediante encuesta online autoadministrada. La utilización de diversos estadísticos descriptivos ha hecho posible examinar la importancia de dichos valores en un contexto real de compra. En concreto, estos resultados han puesto de manifiesto cómo los valores de los alimentos más importantes para los consumidores fueron, en este orden, el sabor, la seguridad alimentaria, el precio y la apariencia; mientras que los valores menos importantes resultaron ser la equidad/comercio justo, seguido del origen de las materias primas y de los efectos de la producción de alimentos en el medio ambiente. Estos primeros resultados dejan entrever cómo los consumidores asumen una inclinación más hedónica y/o utilitaria, dando una menor importancia relativa a aspectos sociales y éticos relacionados con el consumo de alimentos. Sin embargo, al tener en cuenta la gran heterogeneidad en las respuestas de los consumidores, se procedió a segmentar la muestra de encuestados en función de variables sociodemográficas clave, como son el sexo, la edad y el nivel de ingresos; y ello, con el objetivo de ver si existían diferencias significativas en función de estas variables. Los resultados obtenidos fueron, en general, bastante similares, aunque destacaron ciertas diferencias entre los segmentos.

A partir de estos resultados, se consideró interesante la posibilidad de agrupar a los consumidores en función de sus valoraciones sobre los valores de los alimentos, relacionando a su vez dichas valoraciones con los hábitos de consumo y con variables clave de resultados no financieros de marketing como la satisfacción, la confianza y la lealtad. Por lo tanto, en el tercer artículo (capítulo 4) y en el ámbito de la restauración, concretamente en los restaurantes de comida rápida, se desarrolló este objetivo.

En concreto, este trabajo reflejado en el capítulo 4 (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2018), se llevó a cabo en el sector de la comida rápida, debido a que es un sector cada vez más importante en la industria, y una de las consecuencias más emblemáticas de la globalización, puesto que estos tipos de establecimientos se han extendido rápidamente por todo el mundo como respuesta a los hábitos cambiantes de los consumidores (Schroeder y McEachern, 2005; Xu, 2014; Tong y Wong, 2016). Y, por otra parte, este tipo de restaurantes necesitan estrategias más concretas y mejor definidas para poder diferenciarse de sus competidores y conocer a fondo a sus clientes (Kivela, 1997; Koo et al., 1999). Por lo tanto, al considerar los valores de los alimentos, los establecimientos de comida rápida tendrán la posibilidad de desarrollar mejores estrategias de segmentación.

Por consiguiente, con el propósito de comprender el comportamiento de los consumidores en los restaurantes de comida rápida, se recogió una muestra de 400 consumidores de dos cadenas de comida rápida líderes en España, McDonald's y Telepizza. Los resultados de este artículo (Izquierdo-Yusta et al.,

2018) dieron la oportunidad de agrupar a los consumidores en tres clúster diferentes en función de sus evaluaciones de los valores de los alimentos, dando así lugar al grupo “principalmente utilitario”, al grupo “principalmente hedónico”, y al grupo “valores éticos”, los cuales además diferían en cuanto a hábitos de consumo (en términos de frecuencia de visitas, acompañantes y gasto), y en cuanto a las evaluaciones de las variables de resultados no financieros; satisfacción, confianza y lealtad.

Para finalizar, y con el objetivo de profundizar en el estudio del consumidor en relación con sus compras de alimentos, es necesario comprender el comportamiento del consumidor en los establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo teniendo en cuenta variables posteriores a la compra tan importantes como la satisfacción, los costes de cambio y la lealtad. Estas variables constituyen una respuesta a las diferentes evaluaciones que hacen los consumidores sobre las características de los productos de alimentación que les son ofrecidos en este tipo de establecimientos.

Por tanto, y con el objetivo de abarcar todos los aspectos relacionados con la elección y compra de alimentos en el sector de la alimentación, el cuarto artículo de este trabajo (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., en prensa) reflejado en el capítulo 5, se ha centrado en conocer la importancia de los valores de los alimentos en el proceso de compra en este tipo de establecimientos, así como la repercusión de los mismos en la satisfacción, lealtad y costes de cambio con respecto al establecimiento minorista donde se compran los alimentos, aspectos que supondrían un gran avance en el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor en el ámbito de la alimentación.

## 1.2. Justificación

Las investigaciones y estudios sobre el comportamiento del consumidor han hecho posible que los cambios en las sociedades se puedan transmitir correctamente a las estrategias de marketing de las empresas (Solé-Moro, 2003) Y en el ámbito relacionado con los procesos de decisión de compra de alimentos, el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor sigue siendo un tema muy relevante en la actualidad (Rana y Paul, 2017).

Las preferencias de los consumidores por los productos de alimentación siguen suponiendo una preocupación importante para los productores, procesadores y comercializadores de la industria alimentaria (Lister et al., 2014), pues estos agentes deben diseñar las estrategias más adecuadas para lograr su supervivencia en un mercado cada vez más globalizado.

A lo largo de los últimos años, se ha podido observar que la demanda de alimentos es más diversa y sofisticada, los consumidores son más exigentes a la hora de elegir los alimentos que desean consumir y buscan un mayor valor añadido en los mismos. Este fenómeno ha dado lugar a una segmentación más amplia, donde se pueden observar diferentes grupos de consumidores con gustos y necesidades muy variadas, por lo que las empresas se ven en la obligación de diseñar estrategias de diferenciación encaminadas a ofrecer los productos que los diferentes grupos de consumidores están demandando y que mejor satisfacen sus necesidades (Gracia, 2005).

Este tema ha sido elegido por la gran importancia que tienen las compras de alimentos y los alimentos en general en la vida de todas las personas. La importancia trascendente de la comida abarca todas las áreas de la vida, desde la económica hasta la cultural (Cáceres-Nevot y Expeitx- Bernat, 2010; Tirelli, Martínez-Ruiz y Ladrón de Guevara, 2013). Desde una perspectiva que trasciende de la psicología, la alimentación ofrece a las personas oportunidades para comunicarse y participar en diversos procesos de socialización, permitiéndoles expresar y mantener sus estilos de vida, que a menudo están vinculados a sus culturas individuales (Atkins y Bowler, 2001; Logue, 2015).

Con el fin de justificar la importancia de la industria de la alimentación en España, se debe señalar que el sector agroalimentario constituye hoy en día un sector estratégico de la economía española, el cual gracias al trabajo de alrededor de 900.000 explotaciones y 29.000 industrias alimentarias (de las cuales un 95% son pequeñas y medianas empresas), genera un valor cercano a los 100.000 millones de euros, lo que supone un 10% del Producto Interior Bruto (PIB) (Mercasa, 2018).

En consecuencia, no es de extrañar que el sector minorista que pone a disposición de los consumidores los alimentos también sea uno de los más importantes del mundo (Deloitte, 2017). Sin embargo, esto también significa que el sector es altamente competitivo; como resultado, los comerciantes minoristas siempre están buscando ventajas competitivas en su dominio, y por esta razón, los minoristas están fundamentalmente interesados en entender las relaciones entre los comportamientos de los consumidores y sus decisiones de compras de alimentos.

### 1.3. Hipótesis y Objetivos

Partiendo del creciente interés por comprender los procesos de decisión de compra en relación con la alimentación, y de profundizar en el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor, esta investigación se ha centrado en analizar todos estos aspectos en base a los últimos avances en la literatura y el marketing 3.0.

De este modo, este estudio tiene como objetivo general examinar y tratar de explicar el comportamiento de compra y consumo en el contexto de la alimentación a partir de los valores de los alimentos.

En base al objetivo general, se han planteado una serie de objetivos específicos relacionados con cada uno de los artículos planteados a lo largo de esta Tesis Doctoral, los cuales se reflejan a continuación:

- Identificar y profundizar en el estudio de las nuevas variables de los valores de los alimentos que pueden ser explicadas a partir de los valores de los consumidores. La aparición de estas variables en el ámbito académico y científico resulta coherente con la evolución del marketing, especialmente con el marketing 3.0. Se trata además de variables que han sido consideradas formando parte de las influencias externas clave más importantes capaces de explicar los procesos de decisión de compra de alimentos por parte de los consumidores.
- Analizar la literatura relevante sobre la creciente importancia de los valores de los alimentos en los procesos de elección y compra de los consumidores, e identificar cuáles son los valores de los alimentos más importantes para los consumidores en un contexto real de compra, en particular, en los establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo.
- En relación con los mencionados valores de los alimentos, analizar el comportamiento del consumidor en relación con el consumo de alimentos en los restaurantes de comida rápida e identificar las vías para reforzar la satisfacción, confianza y lealtad de los consumidores hacia este tipo de establecimientos.

- Examinar el comportamiento del consumidor en relación con la compra de alimentos en establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo, analizando la influencia que ejercen los valores de los alimentos en los procesos posteriores a la compra y al consumo de alimentos, es decir, en relación con variables de resultados no financieros de marketing, como son la satisfacción, la lealtad y los costes de cambio.

Tras estos objetivos, se exponen a continuación las hipótesis que se han contrastado empíricamente:

H1a: *Los valores de los alimentos influyen positiva y significativamente en la satisfacción con la compra.*

H1b: *Los valores de los alimentos influyen positiva y significativamente en la satisfacción con el establecimiento.*

H2a: *La satisfacción con la compra influye positiva y significativamente en la lealtad.*

H2b: *La satisfacción con el establecimiento influye positiva y significativamente en la lealtad.*

H3: *La satisfacción con la compra influye positiva y significativamente en los costes de cambio.*

H4: *La satisfacción con el establecimiento influye positiva y significativamente en los costes de cambio.*

H5: *Los costes de cambio influyen positiva y significativamente en la lealtad.*

Los resultados obtenidos a partir de los objetivos e hipótesis planteados ayudarán a comprender el comportamiento del consumidor en los sectores más importantes de la industria de la alimentación.

#### 1.4. Planteamiento Metodológico

Esta investigación se ha llevado a cabo siguiendo el procedimiento metodológico que se expone a continuación:

En primer lugar, se ha realizado una búsqueda exhaustiva de todas las de contribuciones científico/académicas relacionadas con el concepto “valores de los alimentos”, actualizando y complementando las aportaciones de las revisiones bibliográficas publicadas en este campo, siendo particularmente relevantes los trabajos de Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y Lusk (2011). Para llevar a cabo este proceso, se han utilizado los motores de bases de datos existentes en internet (Google académico) y las colecciones académicas disponibles en la biblioteca de la Universidad de Castilla- La Mancha (Discovery EBSCO), donde se puede acceder a los textos completos de varios artículos ofrecidos por Google académico.

En el proceso de búsqueda, se emplearon combinaciones de palabras clave, tales como: valores de los alimentos, atributos de los alimentos, venta minorista de productos de alimentación, decisiones de compra de alimentos, restaurantes de comida rápida, comportamiento del consumidor, satisfacción, confianza, lealtad y costes de cambio.

Todas estas exploraciones han permitido encontrar una fuente variada de revistas dedicadas al estudio del comportamiento de compra y consumo de alimentos.

Este filtro nos permitió detectar la bibliografía más relevante dentro de este campo, de manera que obtuvimos un conjunto de fuentes bibliográficas a través de las cuales pudimos realizar la revisión sistemática de la literatura. La exploración de estas fuentes nos permitió observar un número variado de revistas dedicadas al estudio de la comercialización de alimentos, tanto en establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo como en el sector de la restauración, y más específicamente en el ámbito de la comida rápida. De este modo, la revisión de la literatura ha permitido:

- Identificar las variables clave que determinan el comportamiento de compra y consumo de alimentos de los consumidores (valores de los alimentos).
- Clasificar las variables post-compra de carácter no financiero que resultan del comportamiento de compra y/o consumo de los consumidores y que influyen en el mismo.

Tras la mencionada revisión en el capítulo 2 (Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó, 2016) y de acuerdo a las lagunas existentes en la literatura sobre el comportamiento de compra y consumo de alimentos, en primer lugar y sobre la base del artículo de Gómez-Cantó et al. (2018) (capítulo 3), se ha llevado a cabo un análisis estadístico descriptivo a través del programa estadístico SPSS(v.24), el cual ha servido como toma de contacto inicial con el tema en cuestión y ha sentado las bases para un estudio más profundo, por lo que en los siguientes capítulos; capítulo 4 (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2018) y capítulo 5 (Izquierdo Yusta et al., en prensa), se han propuesto dos modelos diferentes, que abarcan los sectores más importantes dentro de la industria de la alimentación, y que van a permitir profundizar en el conocimiento del comportamiento del consumidor en el área investigada. Los modelos incluyen las siguientes variables:

Primer modelo (capítulo 4; Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2018), relacionado con el comportamiento del consumidor en los restaurantes de comida rápida:

- Valores de los alimentos
- Hábitos de consumo
- Satisfacción
- Confianza
- Lealtad

Segundo modelo (capítulo 5; Izquierdo Yusta et al., en prensa), relacionado con el comportamiento del consumidor en los establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo:

- Valores de los alimentos
- Satisfacción con la compra
- Satisfacción con el establecimiento
- Costes de cambio
- Lealtad

En base a las mencionadas variables, se han establecido una serie de hipótesis sobre las relaciones existentes entre las mismas, y con las que se espera contribuir a un mayor conocimiento del consumidor y de su comportamiento de compra y consumo en el ámbito de la alimentación.

De cara a la contrastación empírica, para el primer modelo propuesto en el capítulo 4 (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2018), se ha recogido una muestra de 400 consumidores de comida rápida, específicamente de consumidores de McDonald's y Telepizza; mientras que para el segundo modelo propuesto en el capítulo 5 (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., en prensa), se ha recogido una muestra de 708 consumidores que realizan sus compras en establecimientos minoristas de

alimentación (supermercados, hipermercados, tiendas de descuento, etc.). Estas encuestas han permitido obtener una fuente primaria de datos a partir de la cual se han planteado unos modelos de relaciones causales, los cuales serán contrastados mediante la aplicación de modelos SEM (System Equation Model) con el objetivo de validarlos empíricamente mediante la utilización del software Smart PLS (v.3.0).

Tras la contrastación empírica de los modelos, se ha procedido al análisis de los resultados, contrastando y discutiendo todas las hipótesis planteadas a lo largo de esta investigación para finalmente extraer una serie de conclusiones y recomendaciones dirigidas a los directores y gerentes de los diferentes formatos minoristas contemplados a lo largo de esta Tesis Doctoral.



## **Capítulo 2. Key External Influences Affecting Consumers' Decisions Regarding Food**



## Abstract

Among the numerous internal and external forces that compete for consumers' attention in the context in which they buy their food, this paper will seek to provide a review of the most important external influences, such as the variables related to food itself. To this end, in addition to the food attributes traditionally identified in fields such as consumer behavior, it will give special consideration to the classification of food values. Although the influence of these variables on consumer decisions depends on the individual, analyzing them will undoubtedly increase understanding of consumers' decisions. Additionally, identifying and describing these variables will enable subsequent research on how they influence both consumer behavior and other key outcomes for producers, manufacturers, and retailers in the food industry, such as satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.

Keywords: food products, food values, consumer research, decision making



## 2.1. Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a number of changes in the buying habits and behaviors consumers have traditionally shown when purchasing food products (Pieniak et al., 2010; De Moura et al., 2012; Deloitte, 2015). To understand these changes, it is necessary to take into account the large number of forces, both internal (e.g., prior experience) and external (e.g., characteristics of the food products themselves), that compete for consumers' attention in the context in which they make their decisions (c.f. Garber et al., 2003; Mowen and Minor, 2003; Logue, 2015). Although the extent to which these influences ultimately affect consumers' buying behavior will depend on the individual, analyzing them will undoubtedly increase understanding of consumers' purchase decision processes with regard to food and, thus, facilitate proper planning for producers, manufacturers, and retailers in the food industry.

Consumer research is particularly difficult for food, among other things, because of the especially subtle and complex nature of food products as stimuli at points of purchase and during consumption (Garber et al., 2003). Consequently, among other external influences to receive attention, the relevant literature has focused in particular on variables related to food products themselves (Garber et al., 2003; Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; Lusk, 2011). Unsurprisingly, there is thus increasing interest in the field in trying to identify which food-related variables exert the strongest influence on consumer behavior (Deloitte, 2015; Logue, 2015).

Drawing on these ideas, this paper offers a synthetic review of those food variables that the relevant literature has identified as key external influences, including the latest developments. Specifically, it will address the research on food attributes and the food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), a significant development in the research in this field. The identification and description of these variables is of great interest to enable subsequent work in this area, since: (i) it sheds light on which food variables have generally been considered key and should be taken into consideration in future research; and (ii) it facilitates the subsequent analysis of potential influences on and interrelations with various stages of the food-purchase decision process, as well as on other key results for retailers in the consumer goods industry, both financial (sales and profitability) and non-financial (satisfaction, trust, and loyalty).

## 2.2. Literature Review

### **Food variables as external influences in the consumer decision process: a literature review**

In recent decades, numerous studies have sought to measure consumer preferences for certain food attributes over others (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009). However, some more recent work, such as that by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), has moved beyond the food attributes traditionally considered in the literature to propose a classification of food values, that is, a stable set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, and desired end states associated with purchasing and consuming food.

In light of the importance of both food attributes and food values as external influences affecting consumers' purchase decision processes with regard to food, the following sections will first review the food attributes generally considered in the relevant literature, in order to then use that discussion as a starting point to describe food values.

#### **Product Attributes**

Product attributes provide a basis both for marketers to differentiate and position existing products apart from those of their competitors and for the development of new products. This may be done based on a specific attribute or range of attributes or on several attributes at once (Belch and Belch, 1995; González-Benito et al., 2010).

A product's attributes influence consumers' product choices and are able to play a variety of roles (informational, communicative, symbolic, etc.). Industry operators must know what value consumers attach to those attributes, as well as how they factor into the purchase decision process. Moreover, companies must endow their products with the right level of attributes to meet consumers' expectations, without neglecting related managerial decisions, usually involving resource-allocation, cost, and price-setting considerations. Also, although decades ago the earliest work in the field tended to take into account only quantifiable product attributes that were objectively measurable, such as price, more recently, researchers have begun to include more subjective attributes in their work, such as quality (e.g., Kotler and Keller, 2012).

This broader and relatively more recent view of product attributes including attributes that are not only of an objective and measurable nature is clearly on display in the literature on food products. Indeed, until fairly recently, when choosing a given food product, consumers barely considered other types of issues, such as those related to good farming practices, food safety during the production process, nutritional quality, or the convenience or ease with which the product could be prepared and consumed (Berné and Martínez, 2007). In contrast, today's consumers have more and more information on these aspects and are thus more demanding when choosing the food they want to purchase. For instance, Robinson (2002) found that consumers supported sustainably produced food, although, paradoxically, they were not particularly likely to purchase it.

Nutritional aspects also generate considerable interest among end consumers, influencing their food choices. Consumers use this information to determine what nutrients they ingest, which largely affects their health (Kissileff and Van Itallie, 1982). In this regard, in their analysis of consumer orientations toward the health and hedonic characteristics of food products, Roininen et al. (1999) identified three health-related factors— general health interest, light product interest, and natural product interest—and three taste-related factors—craving for sweet foods, using food as a reward, and pleasure. They also found that women were more interested in health- and taste- related aspects than men, and that young people were less concerned with health and more interested in taste than older consumers.

Recent research by Deloitte (2015) confirmed the growing relevance of health-related attributes to consumers' food purchase decisions, noting that taste, price, and convenience are no longer the sole drivers of consumers' food and beverage purchases. The study further found that, in addition to these traditional drivers, more than half of American consumers now weigh the following drivers in their purchase decisions too: health and wellness, safety, social impact, experience, and transparency.

Food buying and consumption behavior has been widely studied from a psychological perspective, making it possible to focus on certain attributes over others (Logue, 2015). For instance, focusing on food reward, Berridge (1996) found that food consumption may be influenced by, among other things, certain taste-related psychological aspects, derived from the pleasure of the act of eating and the pleasantness of a food's taste.

Other lines of research in this area conducted from a psychological perspective include (Logue, 2015): (i) how people detect flavors; (ii) why people prefer some food to others; (iii) how people end up choosing certain foods over others; and, more specifically, (iv) how and why certain foods are able to influence consumers' choice behavior. All have considered numerous and diverse food attributes, to which they assign varying degrees of importance. Finally, from a perspective that transcends psychology, food provides people with opportunities to communicate and engage in a variety of socialization processes, allowing them to express and maintain their lifestyles, which are often linked to their individual cultures (Atkins and Bowler, 2001; Logue, 2015).

### **Food Values**

To understand how consumers evaluate food attributes and how they impact in the purchase decision process, it is particularly relevant to consider the article of Lusk and Briggeman (2009), who, in a key contribution, moved beyond the simple consideration of traditional food attributes. Although this work was published in the area of agricultural economics, the proposed values were developed based on a profound literature review on food preferences and human values, which enables to recognize these values as a cornerstone contribution in fields such as marketing and consumer behavior. Without doubt these values are closely related to the advent of the values-driven era (Marketing 3.0), that highlights the need to take care of customers not as mere consumers but as complex and multi-dimensional human beings with minds, hearts, and spirits. Because under this philosophy, customers choose those companies and products that satisfy their deepest needs for economic, social, and environmental justice (Kotler et al., 2010).

Rather than estimating consumers' preferences for certain specific food products and attributes, which consumers might have little knowledge of and/or experience with, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) identified a set of food values or meta- attributes for which people might have better-defined preferences in order to gain greater insight into why consumers choose certain food products or attributes over others. To this end, these authors conducted a thorough review of the relevant literature on consumers' willingness to pay for food products and human values, which allowed them to apply the concept of overall life value, previously defined in pioneering work such as Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992), to food. They were thus able to identify a set of food values likely to remain relatively stable over time. The aim was not merely to identify food attributes per se, but rather to identify more abstract attributes, consequences and end states of food consumption that might be applied to explain consumers' choices between a wide range of foods.

Specifically, they identified the following values (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009):

- Naturalness, i.e., the extent to which food is produced without modern technologies;
- Taste, i.e., the extent to which consumption of food is appealing to the senses;
- Price, i.e., the amount paid for food;
- Safety, i.e., the extent to which consumption of food will not cause illness;
- Convenience, i.e., the ease with which food is cooked and/or consumed;
- Nutrition, i.e., the amount and type of fat, protein, vitamins, etc., food contains;
- Tradition, i.e., the preservation of traditional consumption patterns;
- Origin, i.e., where the agricultural commodities were grown;
- Fairness, i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in food production benefit equally;
- Appearance, i.e., the extent to which food looks appealing;
- Environmental impact, i.e., the effect of food production on the environment.

As Lusk and Briggeman (2009) explain, although some of these values may initially seem very similar to some of the classically considered food product attributes, they represent more abstract concepts, often encompassing numerous physical attributes at once. For instance, the value of nutrition can be considered more stable than a consumer's relative preferences for specific vitamin or fat contents. Likewise, while some of the proposed values, such as price, can be classified as personal (i.e., self-centered), others, such as tradition, origin, fairness, and environmental impact, can be regarded as social (i.e., society-centered).

To determine the relative importance consumers give to these attributes, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) conducted a survey of consumers in the US. They found that: (i) in general, there was significant heterogeneity across consumers in terms of the relative importance they assigned to food values; and (ii) on average, safety, nutrition, taste, and price were among the values consumers considered most important.

In a subsequent study, Lusk (2011) found that food values are significantly related to actual grocery store purchases, suggesting that the food values scale could potentially be used, among other things, to explain consumer choice and guide new product development and marketing decisions.

### 2.3. Discussion

This paper has offered a review of those food variables that, acting as external influences, impact consumers' food-purchase decision processes. To this end, it first addressed the food attributes traditionally considered by the relevant literature, showing that, although early research tended to focus especially on objectively measurable attributes, more recently there has been a growing trend toward including more subjective ones. Indeed, recent data have confirmed the need to include these latter types of attributes, as, in addition to assessing easily quantifiable and objective attributes such as price, consumers increasingly also weigh other attributes in their decisions, such as those related to health or wellness.

This paper also considered the eleven food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), a significant advance in the research in this field. These authors suggest that consumers have intermediary values, consisting of a stable set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, and desired end states associated with food purchases. These values are intended to represent the main values influencing food choice and be comprehensive enough to cover the full breadth of issues that tend to drive consumers' decisions with regard to food.

The synthesis provided in this paper helps pave the way for future research in the field by identifying the food variables that are generally considered to be important and should thus be taken into account. This will facilitate their inclusion in subsequent studies, for instance, on potential influences and interrelationships in different stages of the food-purchase decision process or with regard to other key outcome variables.

Finally, one limitation of this article lies in the small number of external influences considered. Future research should thus expand the review to include other external factors, as well as address internal influences.

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## **Capítulo 3. Food Values and the Spanish Consumer: Evidences Obtained in Different Segments**



## Abstract

These days, consumers' food purchases revolve around a great variety of products with very diverse characteristics. In this context, it behooves retailers to understand how consumers evaluate such products in different grocery retailing stores. In this vein, the present work makes two contributions: first, we offer a brief review of the relevant literature that highlights how consumers' fundamental interest has shifted from food attributes to food values; second, we empirically analyze how consumers currently assess said food values. To accomplish the second aim, we gathered survey data among 708 Spanish consumers in April 2017 and analyzed the results using diverse descriptive statistics. We found that hedonic and utilitarian food values (i.e., taste, safety and price) are generally more important to consumers than values such as fairness, product origin, or environmental impact. Notably, these results shift based on the segment of consumer being considered. From these results, we derive numerous strategic recommendations for producers and grocery retailers.

Keywords: Food values, consumer behaviour, decisions.



### 3.1. Introduction

To satisfy the previously proposed aims, this research has followed the subsequent methodological procedure. In the first place, an exhaustive search of academic scientific contributions was carried out around the concept of "food values", updating and complementing the contribution of the literature reviews published in this field, being particularly relevant the works of Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011). This process has been carried out through a series of searches through the existing database engines on the Internet (Google Scholar) and the academic collections of the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Discovery EBSCO), where full texts of several articles offered by Google Scholar can be accessed. In the search strategy, combinations of keywords were used, such as: food attributes, food values, grocery retailing, retail stores, consumer behavior. All these explorations have allowed us to find a varied source of journals dedicated to the study of food retailing.

This filter enabled us to detect the most relevant bibliography within this field, so that we obtained a set of bibliographic sources where we could perform the systematic review of the literature. The exploration of these sources allowed us to observe a variety number of journals devoted to the study of food marketing.

Accordingly, this paper is divided in two parts; the first part offers a brief review of the relevant literature based on the food attributes and values in the context of food purchases, which has made possible to identify the key variables considered by consumers when making their purchases of food in grocery retailing stores; and the second part of this paper, consists of an empirical analysis describing the results of a consumers survey in order to know the assessment that consumers make of such food values and then cover some of the gaps in the literature that concern this topic.

This topic has been chosen because of the high importance of food purchases and food in general in the life of all people. Food's transcendent importance suffuses all areas of life, from the economic to the cultural [3,4]. Unsurprisingly, the retail sector that delivers food to consumers is one of the most important sectors worldwide [5]. However, this also means that the sector is highly competitive; as a result, retailers are always searching for competitive advantages in their domain. For this reason, retailers are fundamentally interested in understanding the relationships between consumers' behaviors and their purchase decisions [6]. Consumer research seeks to supply this understanding, but it is undoubtedly complicated by the complex nature of the

products themselves, how they stimulate at the point of sale, and how consumers interact with them during consumption [7,8]. To compound matters, the last few decades have seen a remarkable change in consumers' purchasing habits and behaviors [6,9], which have particularly manifested in the retail domain.

Due to these changes, numerous researchers have begun analyzing the influence of so-called food values on consumers' decisions, rather than focusing squarely on food attributes [1], in order to understand the variables that drive consumer behaviour [10]. In light of this, the present work makes two contributions: First, we offer a review of the relevant literature regarding the aforementioned shift in consumer interest from food attributes to food values. Second, using the scale of food values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman [1], we analyze the importance of said values in a real purchase context. Specifically, our empirical study involved a sample of 708 consumers who had carried out their food purchases in different types of retail formats in Spain.

### 3.2. Method

The systematic review of the literature has shown that sociodemographic characteristics are not the only drivers of consumers' food purchase decisions; the attributes of food products also play an important role [8,11-13]. Through food attributes, sellers can differentiate and position their products relative to their competitors [8]. These attributes can exert their influence through various roles (e.g., informative, communicative, symbolic, etc.); thus operators in the food industry want to know how to balance consumers' expectations of these attributes with managerial factors, such as costs and logistics [8]. For this reason, the literature has traditionally focused strongly on why consumers pay more attention to some food attributes instead of others.

The earliest works published in this field only considered the physical characteristics of products [14], particularly those that are quantifiable and measurable, such as price. More recent research has focused on more subjective attributes such as quality [15,16]. This shift is part of a larger trend to study food consumption behavior from a psychological perspective [10]: Scholars have particularly focused on issues such as how individuals detect the taste of food, how they form their preferences for some products and attributes over others, as well as how and why certain food attributes influence their purchasing choices and behaviors [8]. Consequently, the consumer has been re-envisioned—from being a solo client to a complex and rational person with feelings—and thus it is necessary to properly understand their needs and how to satisfy them [1,8,15,16].

In this regard, the work of Lusk and Briggeman [1] is particularly relevant. The authors undertook an exhaustive review of the literature about traditionally considered food attributes, and from that developed a classification of food values. In this way, Lusk and Briggeman [1] sought to understand how consumers assess these attributes and what impact these attributes exert in the purchase decision [8]. Central to Lusk and Briggeman's [1] model is the "Means - End Chain" concept proposed by Gutman [17], which captures that consumers differentiate elements of food according to their personal values. In short, we can understand why consumers prefer a particular product over another by considering their most important food values.

Based on Lusk and Briggeman's [1] classification of food values, we can establish a set of beliefs about the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, desires and final states associated with the purchase and consumption of food. The authors derived 11 food values that correspond to generic attributes, namely: Naturalness (i.e., the extent to which the food is produced without modern technologies); Taste (i.e., the extent to which the consumption of the food is appealing to the senses); Price (i.e., the price that is paid for the food); Safety (i.e., the extent to which the consumption of food will not cause illness); Convenience (i.e., the ease with which food is cooked and/or consumed); Nutrition (i.e., the amount and type of fat, protein, vitamins, etc.); Tradition (i.e., preserving traditional consumption patterns); Origin (i.e., where the agricultural commodities were grown); Fairness (i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in the production of the food equally benefit); Appearance (i.e., the extent to which food looks appealing); and Environmental Impact (i.e., the effect of food production on the environment).

At first glance, some of these values seem to be very similar to certain food attributes traditionally considered in the literature. But as Lusk and Briggeman [1] explain, these values represent more abstract concepts that often encompass numerous physical attributes at the same time. Importantly, both the attributes and the food values have been considered variables of great importance due to the influence they exert in consumer decision-making and consumption processes; Therefore, it can be said that these variables have a decisive influence on the consumer when choosing the food they want to consume [16,17].

In order to provide another empirical valuation of Lusk and Briggeman's [1] and Lusk [2] proposed food values, we applied their scale to Spanish consumers in order to understand their food values. Specifically, during the month of April 2017, we collected 708 online questionnaires from residents of the city of Albacete, Spain. The questionnaires were distributed among buyers over 18 years old who

had previously carried out their purchases in the city's retail stores (hypermarkets, supermarkets, discount stores, grocer's shops and traditional food markets). The majority of the respondents (69%) had made their last purchase in a supermarket, while only 1% of the sample made their last purchase in a traditional food market.

For the questionnaire, we adapted the scales of the food value variables from Lusk and Briggeman [1] and Lusk [2]. The questions asked respondents to indicate which values they considered more and less important when buying food, on an ordinal scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) points. Afterward, we assembled their responses into a consumer database and subsequently analyzed their responses using various descriptive statistics.

### 3.3. Results

In the following lines the empirical results obtained will be presented. Looking at the average of the food values, it appears that, in general, consumers place much higher value on the hedonic and utilitarian aspects of food (taste, food safety, and price) compared to the values related to equity, fairness, sustainability, and environmental impact. That said, and taking into account the variance, there was great heterogeneity in the consumers'. In order to know the most important values for different segments of consumers, we proceeded to segment the sample of respondents by sex, age and income level. To do this, the test of Levene and Anovas were calculated in order to know if potential differences for the diverse groups in the variances and means might be shown, and if there were significant differences in the consumers' responses.

Considering the segments differentiated by sex (male / female), women presented a higher average score for all food values compared to men, except for the value of convenience. This suggests that men generally prefer foods that are less complex when it comes to cooking or eating. Both men and women rated taste and safety as the first- and second-most important values, respectively; likewise, both sexes ranked origin and fairness as the least important. Notably, the third-most important value for men was the price, while women paid more attention to the appearance of the food before considering the price.

There were several worthwhile findings regarding the age segmentation of the sample. The most important food value for the youngest segment of the sample (aged between 18 and 33 years) was taste, followed by the appearance of the food; for the older adult consumers (aged 34 and above), food safety was the

most important value. These results parallel those obtained by Roininen et al. [18], who argued that young people are more concerned about taste than health relative to their older peers. Meanwhile, fairness was the least-important food value for all ages of the sample. Origin of the raw materials was the second least-important value for all age groups, except those between 44 and 53 years, for whom the environmental impact was the second least-important value.

Some interesting findings also appeared among the income level segmentation. Among all income levels, taste and safety were the most important food values, while fairness and origin were the least appreciated. The one exception to this was the segment with an average income between 1,201 and 1,800 euros), for whom the least-important values were fairness, first, and environmental impact, second. Therefore, it can be said that "middle class" families exhibit the smallest concern for how their consumption impacts the environment. Meanwhile, consumers with lower incomes generally treat price as the third-most important value, above aspects of nutrition, naturalness and appearance, but price becomes less important than those values for consumers who receive incomes above 1,800 euros [19,32].

### 3.4. Conclusion

Nowadays, surviving in the retail sector hinges on understanding the consumer—and specifically their behaviors, desires and needs. To assist managers in this regard, the present work adopted a double aim: First, we reviewed the relevant literature about the growing relevance of food values in driving consumers' choices. Second, we identified the most important food values among a sample of Spanish consumers and analyzed each value's respective influence over purchase decision processes.

Our literature review makes clear that marketing scholars have traditionally focused on the physical attributes of foods, and almost exclusively on those that are measurable and quantifiable, in order to explain why consumers prefer some elements over others. Most of the recent research, meanwhile, has focused on more abstract or subjective attributes that closely relate to people's general values. This shift accords with the paradigm of marketing 3.0, which sees consumers as complex human beings with feelings that they seek to satisfy through consumption.

For this reason, researchers are increasingly trying to explain consumers' buying behaviors through food values instead of specific product attributes. In this regard, Lusk and Briggeman [1] usefully advanced the field by identifying 11 food values, which served as the object of study in this work. Their proposed values, derived from a review of the literature about preferences and human values, can be understood as a stable set of beliefs within consumers about the relative importance of meta-attributes, consequences, and final states associated with the food purchase. These values have been a fundamental contribution to marketing, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the issues and variables that influence consumers' food choices.

In this work, we sought to determine the relative importance that consumers assign to these values in a real context. Thus, we analyzed a sample of 708 consumers who had previously made purchases in different types of retail establishments in Spain in 2017. After applying various descriptive statistics to the results, we found that the most important values for consumers when making their purchases are taste, safety, price and appearance (in that order). In general, the least-important value is fairness (i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in the production of the food equally benefit), followed by the origin of the raw materials and the effects of food production on the environment. These empirical results suggest that consumers generally follow a hedonic and utilitarian inclination, placing relatively less importance on fairness, sustainability, and environmental impact.

Regarding the results obtained through the sample segmentation, it is worth noting that women in general have presented a higher average than the men in practically all values except that which refers to the ease with which a food is cooked or consumed, value to which the male sex pays more attention when choosing a certain food in the establishment. And the female sex pays more attention to the appearance of the food before considering the price of the same, the opposite occurs with men, who give more importance to the price than to the appearance of the food.

On the other hand, younger consumers value more the taste and appearance of a food while the more adult public shows a greater concern for its safety. And regarding the income level segmentation, it could be said that consumers with lower incomes, after taste and safety, pay more attention to the food price before considering issues related to nutrition, naturalness or the extent to which the food is produced without modern technologies, or with the appearance of food, being these aspects more important than the price for consumers who receive higher incomes.

These findings may aid retailers in better understanding their consumer segments and adapting their offers in order to gain a competitive market position. Likewise, food producers would undoubtedly benefit from understanding consumers' most important food values, which allows them to tailor their manufacturing to better suit consumers' needs and desires. Marketing managers could, for instance, design campaigns that emphasize the overlap between their products and their target consumers' most important food values. It is also worth noting that, even though a minority of consumers appreciate the values of social orientation and environmental awareness, these objectives still constitute a worthwhile market differentiation.

In short, this work underscores the key food values that future research should utilize. Subsequent studies should analyze the influence of food values on non-financial outcomes, such as consumer satisfaction, attitude, and behavioral loyalty. It would also be interesting to see whether the proposed food values can reliably predict consumers' actual purchase behaviors and beliefs, which will help to identify how consumers, as a whole, respond to changes in the composition of foods.

Some of the limitations of this work are manifested in the empirical part of it, so we encourage additional research to adopt other statistical methods, such as structural equation models, that are more robust and can reveal alternative viewpoints.



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**Capítulo 4. Consumers' Behaviour in Fast-food  
Restaurants: A Food Value Perspective from Spain**



## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to understand consumers' behaviour in fast-food restaurants in Spain. To this end, the authors conducted a survey that combined a classification of food values, as proposed in the relevant literature, with a related model that links personal values to behaviour.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A sample of 400 consumers was gathered from two different, leading fast-food chains operating in Spain. With these data, respondents were grouped through hierarchical cluster analysis and *K*-measures, and in accordance with Lusk and Briggeman's (2009) food values and the food-related lifestyle model. The authors validated these clusters by means of ANOVA and discriminant analysis, which led to useful observations about inter-group differences in consumers' habits, as well as their satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

**Findings** – The results indicate that consumers can be clustered into three groups based their food values assessments: the "mainly utilitarian" group, the "mainly hedonic" group and the "ethical values" group. These groups not only demonstrate diverse habits, but also differ on key variables such as satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

**Practical implications** – The authors offer several managerial recommendations for designing and developing segmentation strategies in the fast-food industry. Any such strategies should acknowledge that all consumer groups appear to value restaurants' efforts to provide them with both hedonic and utilitarian benefits, although the extent varies across groups.

**Originality/value** – Among the relevant literature, this research is the only one that examines the existence of distinct consumer groups based on their food values assessments. In addition, this paper analyses inter-group differences in terms of both diverse consumptions habits (frequency of visits, expenditure, etc.) and key marketing variables (satisfaction, trust and loyalty).

**Keywords** Values, Loyalty, Trust, Satisfaction, Cluster, Consumer habits



#### 4.1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the process of globalisation has led to important cultural and sociological changes that have seeped into consumers' habits and culinary preferences. For instance, today's consumers exhibit a heightened sensitivity about the food they eat, and their anxieties are wide-ranging: from the dangers of food poisoning, to the broad health impact of food (e.g. chemical additives, high fat content and the related chronic diseases), to the environmental and regulatory issues surrounding food production (Worsley and Lea, 2008). These concerns have arisen in tandem with many consumers spending less time buying and cooking their own meals (Ayechu and Durá, 2010).

In light of these developments, the restaurant industry operators are challenged to design and develop strategies tailored to specific market segments. However, the restaurant sector is already highly atomised: on the supply side, for instance, companies cater to very specific consumer segments (vegetarian, organic, etc.) or adapt their offer to segments with specific needs (e.g. gluten intolerance). This trend has similarly compelled producers and manufacturers to offer segment-specific products in order to better meet consumers' needs. Hence, restaurants need more refined strategies in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors and gain thorough knowledge of their customers (e.g. Kivela, 1997; Koo et al., 1999).

This need is especially pronounced among fast-food restaurants, which are an increasingly important sector of the industry. As one of the most iconic forms of globalisation, fast-food restaurants have spread rapidly to major cities all over the world in response to the changing habits of urban consumers (Schroeder and McEachern, 2005; Tong and Wong, 2016; Xu, 2014). Such restaurants draw consumers for several reasons: convenience and/or time savings (Clemente-Ricolfe and Gómez-Layana, 2006); the pleasure of enjoying this type of family meal (Darian and Cohen, 1995); the positive image that they project when marketed as establishments of youthful and modern food (Fàbrega, 2004); their low price, wide schedules and service speed, or even food offerings that are healthier and more respectful towards the environment (Libremercado, 2016).

Operators can use several variables to design and develop such segmentation strategies. The common tradition has been to use socioeconomic and demographic variables such as gender, age, standard of living and education. However, there has been recent interest in new features stemming from consumers' values. Within this latter research stream, it is worth highlighting the food values scale proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), who classified food

values based on a review of the literature on food preferences and human values. Also worth noting is the food-related lifestyle (FRL) model proposed by Grunert et al. (1993), which tries to explain consumers' behaviour towards their food choices in terms of their individual FRLs. The FRL model effectively proposes a relationship between the product and value attainment (although such a relationship can be more or less indirect).

There are at least three strategic reasons for fast-food operators to consider this research stream: the need to identify how the health issues surrounding fast food (such as the observed relationship between its consumption and weight gain and/or obesity; Currie et al., 2010) might affect consumers' perception of the firm's image; the growing need to establish long-term relationships with customers, which requires a detailed analysis of their behaviours; and the intensive competitive environment of the fast-food industry and the subsequent need for long-term survival strategies (Law et al., 2004; Momtaz et al., 2013).

Given the above, the present study seeks a better comprehension of the behaviours of fast-food consumers in Spain – specifically, how to achieve and/or bolster their satisfaction with, trust in and loyalty towards this type of store. This research hopes to provide managers with a greater understanding of different consumer segments and their respective food values – and further, how these values relate to satisfaction, trust and loyalty. With this intention in mind, we adopted Lusk and Briggeman's (2009) food values classification, which reflects many of the previously mentioned tendencies and is consistent with the precepts of the FRL model, to classify fast-food consumers into different clusters. This will enable us to investigate significant differences in those clusters' habits and non-financial metrics (satisfaction, trust and loyalty). Based on the results, we will propose a series of recommendations for the managers of fast-food restaurants.

## 4.2. Literature review

### 4.2.1. The relevance of food values

As previously pointed out, the past few decades have seen several shifts in how people purchase and consume food. In order to sustain a competitive advantage, fast-food business managers need to understand the aspects that guide consumer preferences and then incorporate those aspects in their marketing strategies (Abdullah et al., 2011). It is in this vein that the work of Lusk and Briggeman (2009) becomes especially useful. Their paper developed a classification of food values, reflecting a set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences and desired end-states associated with purchasing and consuming food. Having built the values upon a deep literature review on food preferences and human values, the authors created a system that recognises consumers as complex and multi-dimensional (Martínez-Ruiz and Gómez-Cantó, 2016).

Indeed, these values encompass most of the previously highlighted aspects, such as the growing concern for nutrition (nutrition and safety values), the natural environment (environmental impact value), social justice (fairness, origin, tradition and naturalness values) and whose consumption evokes feelings and provides experiences (appearance, taste and convenience values). By considering these values, fast-food restaurants may be able to develop better segmentation strategies.

In the food research domain, it is common to see values linked to consumers' lifestyles. One of the commonly used models in this field is Grunert's (1993) FRL model, which relates to the systems of cognitive categories, scripts and their associations, which relate a set of food products to a set of values (Grunert et al., 1993). The system of cognitive structures that the FRL contains is assumed to include different kinds of cognitive schemas related to food, purchase motives and food quality aspects, as well as broad cognitive scripts related with cooking methods, ways of shopping and consumptions situations (Grunert et al., 1993).

The FRL and food values scale overlap in a few ways. For one, the model proposes a relationship between the food product and value attainment (although this relationship could be indirect depending on the product, the usage situation and the way that food products are transformed into meals) (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1990). This relationship reflects consumers' freedom in how they try to use food products to attain values and difficulties that the consumer chooses food

products directed by expected value attainment. Second, the desired higher-order product attributes that underpin the FRL model refers to attributes that may apply to food products in general, such as natural, nutritious, convenient, etc. These latter attributes are considered by the values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009).

#### 4.2.2 The customer-business relationship

Businesses exist and compete to create satisfied customers (Anderson and Fornell, 2000). Investors are attracted to companies that excel at satisfying their customers, as those firms recognise that the amount of goods or services they produce matters less than convincing customers to return. In the restaurant industry, providing a variety of fresh, healthy food remains an important criterion for satisfying customers (Qin et al., 2010), but companies must also offer dining experiences that combine tangible and intangible elements in order to meet or exceed customers' expectations (Tarn, 1999).

In the past, when fast-food companies were more novel, they could satisfy customers simply through tangible offerings (i.e. the food itself). However, people have become more gastronomically sophisticated, and consequently, they have become more demanding about their dining expectations. For example, newer generations are shifting away from the traditional towards the new, the innovative and the exciting – all of which are intangible qualities. While 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-lasting emotions and memories (Zopiatis and Pribic, 2007).

This trend towards the novel and intangible is largely driven by younger consumers, perhaps indicating the importance they attribute to hedonic (i.e. subjective and individualistic) consumption. Hedonic consumption provides these consumers with joy and pleasure (Irani and Heidorzaden, 2011) through the multisensorial, fantasy and emotional aspects derived from their experience with the product (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). In the context of fast-food restaurants, such hedonic benefits might be derived from the food's good taste, among other features (Maehle et al., 2015). The flip side of hedonic consumption is utilitarian consumption, which is more "rational" and focussed towards an objective (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). This implies that consumers acquire products in an efficient way and for a functional purpose (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998). In the fast-food context, utilitarian benefits might take the form of low prices, for example (Maehle et al., 2015).

In practice, though, the majority of products seek to provide a combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit with different degrees of emphasis. However, consumers frequently consider the majority of products as exclusively hedonic or utilitarian (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Fuljahn and Moosmayer, 2011). For this reason, Ryu et al. (2010) divided fast-food customers based on whether they professed a hedonic or utilitarian motivation for patronising such restaurants. This research found 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.

Based on the above, restaurateurs should seek to improve customers' perceptions of both hedonic and utilitarian values to ensure satisfaction and encourage positive behaviours and emotions, such as returning to the restaurant or talking positively about their dining experience. 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).

In order to enact this strategy, companies need to build trust built with consumers, which is required for positive outcomes such as customer loyalty, retention, purchase intention, willingness to act and overall market performance (Erdem and Swait, 2004).

However, most of the extensive research on brand trust has focussed more on the results of trust (e.g. loyalty and repeat business) than its predictors. For instance, Jacoby and Chesnut (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. Earlier studies often pursued the former approach: Dick and Basu (1994), for example, defined loyalty as the relationship between the "relative attitude" towards an entity (brand/store/vendor) and "patronage behaviour". However, more recent studies have adopted an attitudinal approach (De Ruyter et al., 1998) in order to provide a fuller picture.

Still, there is a largely answered question about what builds trust in consumers. With a focus on the service sector, Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggested that trust arises for clients when they feel secure with how they are treated and trust that any information they might provide will be kept confidential. Several authors have since translated this issue of perceived service quality to the fast-food industry, finding that factors such as food taste, establishment cleanliness,

service speed and staff friendliness impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Qin and Prybutok, 2009a, b; Qin et al., 2010). Price and nutritional value are gaining increasing importance, though (Kara et al., 1995), as are convenient operating hours.

With regard to food products, trust is closely linked to other basic marketing concepts such as safety, nutrition and health. Trust is also a potentially important factor in consumers' purchasing behaviour towards food products (Bredahl, 2001). Consumers sometimes lose their trust in the food production chain and fear that their health could be seriously compromised (cf. Worsley and Lea, 2008), and then it might become necessary to restore said trust. Such considerations are crucial for companies trying to gain customer loyalty and expand their persistent customer base.

In any case, it is clear that consumer trust, loyalty and satisfaction are interconnected constructs. For instance, several studies have determined that high customer satisfaction and service quality result in higher customer loyalty and a willingness to recommend a firm to another person (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding et al., 1993; Rust and Oliver, 1994).

Likewise, 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. By defining loyalty in terms of purchase frequency and amount spent per order or visit, Kendrick (1998) effectively implied that customers must be satisfied in order to become loyal to and profitable for a company. Bowen and Chen (2001) corroborated this argument in their study on the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, finding a positive correlation between loyal customers and profitability. Similarly, Kumar and Shah (2004) noted that customer loyalty is an important part of developing relationships that increase business and promote retention.

Relatedly, many researchers have provided empirical evidence for a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions such as returning to an establishment or recommending it to friends – all of which have obvious implications for profitability (Ryu et al., 2010). Moreover, high levels of satisfaction have the collateral effect of reducing the amount of money that needs to be invested in attracting new customers, as loyal customers effectively fill that role for free (Lovelock and Wright, 2002).

### 4.3. Methodology

#### 4.3.1. Data collection

In order to collect the data, we developed a structured questionnaire that intended to gather all the necessary information for the research. In order to keep the sampling error below 5 per cent, we conducted 400 personal surveys at the exit of different McDonald's and Telepizza establishments located in the city of Burgos (Spain) in 2013. We selected these fast-food chains because McDonald's is the leading fast-food chain in Spain, and Telepizza is one of the Spanish-originating brands that has achieved a consolidated image and global coverage. We chose the city of Burgos because its population size is fairly representative of most Spanish cities (Caixabank Research, 2014). 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. The survey was voluntary and completely anonymous, and consumers did not receive any kind of incentive (Table I).

#### 4.3.2. Empirical research

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 doing so, marketing managers are likely to reach their target market(s) far more effectively and efficiently, and thereby better satisfy their customers' needs.

Table I. Technical details

Universe	Consumers of fast-food restaurants over the age of 18 (September–October 2013)
Sample unit	Consumer of fast-food restaurants over the age of 18 (September–October 2013)
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

We utilised a sequential process to meet the objectives of determining, analysing and characterising consumer groupings at fast-food restaurants. First, we built upon the food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009) to form user groups through hierarchical cluster analysis and K-measures. In a second phase, we validated these clusters by means of ANOVA and discriminant analysis. In a third and final phase, we performed parametric and non-parametric tests to uncover the existence of inter-group differences in terms of satisfaction, trust, loyalty and consumer habits.

#### 4.3.3. Results and discussion

In the hierarchical cluster analysis, we used squared Euclidean distance as the measure of proximity and the Ward method as the classification algorithm. This produced a dendrogram that allowed us to determine the number of clusters and the centroids, which was necessary to apply the K-means method. We obtained a total of three clusters, which were validated by both ANOVA and discriminant analysis. The ANOVA results reflect the existence of inequality of means between the groups (see Table II).

The following paragraphs offer a brief description of the groups. The clusters were formed by taking the average values of the variables, which are shown in Table II:

- Group 1. Mainly utilitarian: people in this group place importance on the price paid for food. They also attach considerable value to appearance and taste. They gave the remaining values lower scores than the other respondents. A total of 34.5 per cent of the sample belonged to this group. Although these consumers emphasise values related to both utilitarian and hedonic benefits, we coded this group as “mainly utilitarian” due to the high relevance they assigned to price.
- Group 2. Mainly hedonic: accounting for 24 per cent of the sample, this group comprises those consumers who value all aspects highly except for price. Like Group 1, these consumers place a high emphasis on values related to both utilitarian and hedonic benefits, but we coded this group as mainly hedonic due to the high importance placed on appearance, taste (especially with respect to Group 3) and convenience (especially with respect to Group 1).
- Group 3. Ethical values: The people in this group were the least concerned about the price, taste and appearance, and instead identified with a range of values related to health, the environment and social responsibility ( for

simplicity's sake, we will jointly refer to them as "values"). They also emphasised aspects such as naturalness, nutrition, origin, tradition, environmental impact, safety and fairness. This group accounted for the largest share of users (41.5 per cent).

Table II. Mean values of the variables between groups and the ANOVA

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

Note: \*Level of significance < 0.001

The multiple discriminant analysis revealed the existence of differences in means between the groups (i.e. the equality of means). In addition, low Wilks'  $\lambda$  values were observed. The  $\chi^2$  associated with the Wilks'  $\lambda$  means that the hypothesis of differences in the scores given to the independent variables between the consumer groups can be accepted.

Box's M test showed that the F-statistic was 2.85, with a significance level of 0.0001. With this, we can reject the null hypothesis that the variance–covariance matrices present no statistically significant differences between the groups of clients. Finally, the confusion matrix shows that 96.8 per cent of the originally grouped cases were correctly classified. All of the above confirms that the three clusters obtained were different and correctly identified.

In general, the analysis corroborates earlier findings (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Fuljahn and Moosmayer, 2011) that all consumer groups appreciate fast-food restaurants' efforts to provide them with some combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit to varying extents.

Table III shows the differences in the three clusters' consumer habits in terms of the variables previously reviewed (e.g. Kendrick, 1998).

In general, the customers from the sample were heavy fast-food restaurant users: 73.5 per cent ate at such restaurants one or more times a week. Nonetheless, the groups exhibited profound differences in usage: The "mainly utilitarian" consumers were the least likely to patronise this type of restaurant, while consumers in the other two groups ate at them several times a week or even every day. It is notable that those clients least sensitive to price (the "ethical values" group) were also the most likely to eat at fast-food restaurants. In line with the practical recommendations of Anderson and Miroso (2014), this latter finding might indicate that, amidst some restaurant operators' efforts to present a "healthier" image, some consumers may perceive them as quick service restaurants with healthy food options.

With regard to dining companions, the customers in the sample generally went to the restaurants with their friends, family or partners (82.5 per cent in all). Of the rest, 10.25 per cent went alone and 7.25 per cent went with colleagues from work. In terms of between-group differences, those who ate with friends were mainly from the "mainly utilitarian" group, while those who went with their families were mainly from the "mainly hedonic" and "ethical values" groups. Members of the "mainly utilitarian" group hardly went to fast-food restaurants with their families at all.

Table III. Inter-group differences in consumer habits

Variable	%	$\chi^2$	Percentages by groups		
			Mainly utilitarian	Mainly hedonic	Ethical values
<i>Frequency of visit</i>		$p < 0.001$			
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
<i>Companions</i>		$p = 0.024$			
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
<i>Expenditure per person</i>		$p = 0.258$			
Less than 6 euros	21.50		23.91	18.75	21.08
From 6–11 euros	44.50		46.38	46.88	41.57
From 12–17 euros	24.50		24.64	26.04	23.49
Over 17 euros	9.50		5.07	8.33	13.86

We observed no meaningful differences in average per capita expenditure. The largest share of the sample (44.5 per cent) spent between 6 and 11 euros per person. The members of the “mainly utilitarian” group were the most price-sensitive and patronised restaurants less frequently in order to spend less.

With regard to satisfaction, customers were generally satisfied with the food at the restaurant and with the establishment itself (a score of more than 3 on a scale from 1 to 5). The most satisfied clients were those from the “mainly hedonic” group (score of approximately 4), while the least satisfied were those from the “ethical values” group (see Table IV).

An examination of the previous table illuminates several interesting findings. First, all customer groups presented higher scores on those variables related to satisfaction with the food, satisfaction with the establishment, and trust, but lower scores for loyalty. In other words, customers had the most appreciation for variables related to the short and medium term.

With regard to the short term, people presented higher satisfaction scores for the food compared to the establishment itself. For the medium term, it seems important that the scores on the trust variables paralleled those on the satisfaction variables. With regard to the long term, there were three loyalty variables that received scores lower to 3. From highest to lowest score: “meals outside the home are consumed at this establishment”, “best option for food away from home” and “likelihood to recommend the establishment”. Notably, although the loyalty variable “regular visits to the establishment” had a higher score than its peers, it might reflect a mere routine behaviour more than actual loyalty.

Additionally, we observed that the mainly hedonic group had the overall highest scores, while the ethical values group had the overall lowest scores. As for trust, the data were generally similar to those on satisfaction (with scores of over 3 points). Therefore, it seems that the “mainly hedonic” customer group tends to present higher scores in satisfaction, trust and loyalty. In contrast, the customer group that primarily values aspects related to health, the environment, and social responsibility presented lower scores in all these variables. This latter finding might suggest that fast-food restaurants have not successfully linked their image to ethical values.

Inter-group differences were mainly found among customers from the “mainly hedonic” group, who maintained a very strong trust in the restaurant (score of around 4). We performed an ANOVA and a Mann–Whitney U test on the “mainly utilitarian” and “ethical values” groups to establish whether the two clusters differed. Both tests revealed statistically significant differences for only three variables: the establishment’s honesty, the qualifications of its employees and its technical resources. The “ethical values” group consistently gave higher scores to the first two variables.

#### 4.4. Conclusions

The present study aimed to understand how consumers’ food values relate to their behaviours at fast-food restaurants. To this end, we joined the food values scale proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009) with the FRL model proposed by Grunert et al. (1993) in a survey of fast-food customers in Spain. Overall, the results corroborated the importance of designing segmented strategies in order to garner diverse consumers.

First, we identified three distinct groups of consumers: the “mainly utilitarian” group (32.45 per cent of the sample), which comprises those consumers who place top importance on the price paid for food, but also assign considerable value to appearance and taste; the “mainly hedonic” group (24 per cent of the sample), who place high value on all aspects except for price, and especially on the values of appearance, taste and convenience (relative to other clusters); and finally, the “ethical values” group (41.5 per cent of the sample), who most identify with a range of values related to safety, the environment and social responsibility. In addition, and in line with reviews of the relevant literature, all consumer groups seemed to appreciate fast-food restaurants’ efforts to combine hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit to varying extents.

Table IV. Inter-group differences in satisfaction, trust and loyalty

Variable	Mean	ANOVA /H- Kruskal-Wallis	Average values for groups		
			Mainly utilitarian	Mainly hedonic	Ethical values
<i>Satisfaction with the food</i>					
The food met my expectations	3.78	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.94	4.07	3.48
The food was satisfactory	3.76	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.75	4.22	3.50
Satisfaction with the food prepared in this establishment	3.69	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.84	4.15	3.31
<i>Satisfaction with the establishment</i>					
Good choice of establishment	3.57	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.69	3.89	3.28
Total satisfaction with this establishment	3.74	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.75	4.23	3.44
Total satisfaction compared to other restaurants	3.39	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.37	3.93	3.10
<i>Trust</i>					
The establishment keeps its promises	3.54	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.36	4.10	3.35
Truthfulness of the information provided by the establishment	3.53	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.38	4.09	3.33
Honesty of the establishment	3.51	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.18	4.13	3.43
Trust in the establishment's intentions	3.52	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.27	4.07	3.42
Sincere and honest information	3.46	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.21	4.15	3.27
Professionalism of the establishment	3.61	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.46	4.11	3.45
Technical resources of the establishment	3.57	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.57	3.96	3.33
Qualifications of the workers	3.46	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.12	3.91	3.48
Concern for client satisfaction	3.68	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.49	4.17	3.56
Proper treatment received	3.76	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.64	4.15	3.63
Ease of obtaining information from the establishment	3.54	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.27	4.13	3.42
<i>Loyalty</i>					
Meals outside the home are consumed at this establishment	2.71	<i>p</i> 00.001	2.70	3.13	2.48
Likelihood to recommend the establishment	2.83	<i>p</i> 00.001	2.91	3.36	2.45
Best option for food away from home	2.78	<i>p</i> 00.001	2.75	3.30	2.51
Regular visits to this establishment	3.64	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.71	3.95	3.40
Regular business with the establishment	3.54	<i>p</i> 00.001	3.45	3.96	3.36

Note: Scale of 1 to 5

Second, even though most of the respondents were heavy fast-food restaurants users, there were some interesting differences between them: those clients least sensitive to price (the “ethical values” group) were also the most likely to eat at fast-food restaurants. The more that fast-food restaurants position themselves as having healthy options, the more they might attract consumers from this group. Moreover, we found that the majority of consumers went to the restaurants with their friends, family or partners (82.5 per cent in all). Consumers who ate with friends were mainly from the mainly utilitarian group, whilst those who went with their families were mainly from the mainly hedonic and ethical values groups. Members of the “mainly utilitarian” group hardly went to fast-food restaurants with their families at all. No significant differences were observed in average per capita expenditure, being the largest share of the sample spent between 6 and 11 euros per person.

Third, we observed that all customer groups expressed higher scores for variables related to satisfaction with the food, satisfaction with the establishment and trust, but lower scores for loyalty. It seems that customers had the most appreciation for the variables related to the short term (satisfaction) and medium term (trust). Thus, restaurant managers may struggle with achieving the long-term outcome (loyalty to the store), as consumers do not seem to appreciate fast-food restaurants in that way. Moreover, the high scores among the mainly hedonic group, coupled with the low scores of the ethical values group, may reflect such restaurants’ reputation as being contrary to ethical values.

Several interesting recommendations can be drawn from these findings. For instance, all consumer groups appeared to value the restaurants’ efforts to provide them with a combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits. Thus, these restaurants should continue to enhance or improve the presence of values related to such benefits. In doing so, these values may translate from the establishment’s image to the corporate image. In addition, managers should analyse why consumers do not exhibit a real loyalty to the establishment in the long term, despite their routine behaviour of repeatedly visiting the store. It is important to understand the real limits on attracting loyal customers, who are pivotal to the establishment’s long-term survival.

One way to boost customer loyalty might be to address the market gap between fast-food restaurants and “ethical values” customers. Such consumers might discover a greater interest in visiting fast-food restaurants if they exhibit more concern for the environment and social responsibility. In this sense, advertising campaigns focussed solely on the health quality of food might be sub-optimal for attracting this customer segment. However, attracting these customers will require not only better communication, but also incremental innovation through the development of, for example, healthier meals and greater environmental activism.

It is worth adding that the “mainly hedonic” customers placed substantial importance (relative to the other two groups) on the issue of trust, particularly as it concerns the delivery of the service. From a business perspective, this suggests that restaurants should undertake specific actions to increase trust. These actions might include providing more information on calories and nutritional values, as that is where the greatest informational asymmetries have been identified.

Finally, we found that customer satisfaction does not meaningfully contribute to customer loyalty, at least in this context. Indeed, consumers concerned about health, the environment and social responsibility were the least loyal, and yet 58.43 per cent of them frequent these types of fast-food restaurants several times a week or more. This finding aligns with Carpenter (2008), who established that consumer behaviour may be repeated more 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, 1997). 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.



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#### **Capítulo 4. Consumers' Behaviour in Fast-food Restaurants: A Food Value Perspective from Spain**

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#### Further reading

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**Capítulo 5. The Influence of Food Values on  
Post-Purchase Variables at Food Establishment**



## Abstract

**Purpose** -- The importance of food values for the post-purchase process has not been widely studied. Most previous research in this line has focused on examining either the attributes of specific food categories, without taking the corresponding values into account, or food-purchasing attitudes and behaviour. To address this gap in the research, this paper delves deeper into the influence of food values on post-purchase variables.

**Design/methodology/approach** -- Specifically, it analyses the influence of food values on satisfaction with the establishment and with the purchases made at the establishment, loyalty and switching costs. To this end, a sample of 708 consumers, collected through online questionnaires in Spain, is analysed using various descriptive statistics and causal models.

**Findings** -- The findings confirm the influence of food values on satisfaction and that satisfaction positively influences loyalty. Switching costs were not found to moderate the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.

**Research limitations/implications** -- The survey had to be completed online, and, thus, respondents needed to have an e-mail address. This influenced the respondents' profile, since many consumers over the age of 54 do not have e-mail, do not use it, or are more reluctant to complete online surveys.

**Practical implications** -- Purchase satisfaction was not found to affect switching costs, which reinforces the idea that loyalty can sometimes be spurious. It would thus be an indicator that, as long as consumers have no other option, they will continue to shop at the establishment. In contrast, establishment satisfaction did generate switching costs. This finding could be due to aspects such as convenience, the development and maintenance of relationships with the employees, knowledge of where products are located in the store, etc. Customers may be dissatisfied with their purchase, yet still satisfied with an establishment, which could entail very high switching costs for them and, therefore, cause them to remain loyal (albeit spuriously) to the establishment.

**Originality/value** -- This research contributes to the literature in this field by examining the influence of food values on key postpurchase variables.

**KEYWORDS:** Food values, consumer behaviour, satisfaction, loyalty, switching costs.



## 5.1. Introduction

There is considerable interest in understanding consumer behaviour based on the motivations, preferences, and habits that trigger the purchase of food products (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014). Food choice is a complex issue: People can make around 200 decisions per day related to food and beverage consumption (Wansink and Sobal, 2007). Thus, the purchase of food for consumption is no longer considered a purely routine process and has come to be regarded as a process with a high degree of consumer engagement, especially in certain situations and for certain products. The food-product purchasing process can be described as a complex process influenced by individual (personality), environmental (Furst *et al.*, 1996), and sociodemographic aspects, as well as motivations and values (Chen, 2007; Wadolowska *et al.*, 2008), amongst other things. Aspects related to context and social interaction might also be cited, as well as the sensory attributes of foods and the information stated on the product (King *et al.*, 2004).

The whole process is influenced by the changes in consumer buying and consumption habits of recent years. Over the last few decades, a debate has arisen over how aspects such as health or ethics influence eating in terms of food production and distribution (Clarke *et al.*, 2008). Despite increased social awareness about the importance of a healthy, balanced diet, more and more people suffer from obesity, are less physically fit, and have a more sedentary lifestyle. Likewise, consumer groups have emerged that are more concerned with the genetic modification processes that have become increasingly common in commercialised food (Luomala *et al.*, 2006). For all of these reasons, determining how consumers assess the characteristics of the food products on offer at different food establishments is of great interest.

With a view to addressing these consumer concerns, in the field of retail, retailers are devoting more and more space to dietary and health products, amongst other things. There is also increased interest in identifying which aspects of the purchased food and of the retailers that sell it shoppers value most, as well as which ones have the greatest influence on key variables such as satisfaction, loyalty, or switching costs (Martínez- Ruiz *et al.*, 2010).

In this broad and heterogeneous frame of reference, it is helpful to take a more detailed look at the relatively new concept of food values and, especially, at how consumers take them into account in their food purchasing and consumption processes (c.f., Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; Lusk, 2011; Martínez-Ruiz and Gómez-Cantó, 2016). The present paper aims to examine the importance of food values in the food-purchasing and consumption process, as well as their impact on satisfaction, loyalty, and switching costs with regard to the retail establishment

where the food is bought. To achieve this goal, the remainder of this paper will be structured as follows: First, it will offer a review of the relevant literature on this line of research to enable the formulation of research hypotheses. Next, it will analyse the results of the empirical part of the research, which was conducted using a database built with an online questionnaire completed by consumers in Spain. Finally, it will discuss the conclusions and implications for management, as well as the limitations and future lines of research.

## 5.2. Literature review

### 5.2.1. Food Values

Several studies have shown that personal values can predict the consumption of products such as food (e.g., Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Povey et al., 2000) influencing consumers' choices (e.g., Allen and Baines, 2002; Feather et al., 1998). Building on that work, other studies, including key subsequent contributions such as Lusk and Briggeman (2009) or Lusk (2011), have sought to identify why consumers prefer some food products over others, taking into account the most important food values for the end consumer.

Specifically, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) conducted an extensive review of the relevant literature on end-consumers' willingness to pay for food products and for the values they represent, applying to food the general concept of values previously defined by authors such as Rokeach (1973) or Schwartz (1992). They argue that consumers have intermediate values consisting of a stable set of beliefs about the relative importance of certain meta-attributes resulting from end states (desired goals and states), associated with the purchase and consumption of food. The existence of these values could play a key role in explaining consumers' choices according to the aforementioned means-end chain theory, which postulates that fundamental underlying values motivate consumers' purchase decisions.

The literature review shows that many studies have sought to identify consumers' preferences for product-specific attributes, without considering the fact that, when making their purchase decision, consumers are choosing from a wide range of products with a large variety of characteristics, attributes or features (Lister et al., 2014). This is why Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011) study the general classifications attributable to food in the form of values, since they express more abstract attributes, capable of explaining consumers' purchases over time. Some of these food values, such as safety, origin, or naturalness, have frequently been considered in many subsequent studies conducted in the field of consumer preferences (e.g., Adalja et al., 2015).

### 5.2.2. The influence of food values on key post-purchase variables

Satisfaction is one of the main key variables in the construction of company-consumer relationships (Oliver, 1997). In general, consumer satisfaction can be defined as a global evaluation or a state of feeling toward a product, service, or establishment (Olsen *et al.*, 2005). For Giese and Cote (2000), consumer satisfaction is a response (cognitive or affective) of varying intensity, with a time-specific point of determination and limited duration, directed towards focal aspects of product acquisition and/or consumption. In light of this definition, a customers' satisfaction with his or her purchase can be the result of the value provided by that experience and thus could include both hedonic and utilitarian benefits, bearing in mind that every consumer behaves differently and assigns different value to his or her purchase experience.

In this regard, Vad Andersen and Hyldig (2015) observed that the sensory properties of food (e.g., appearance, taste, texture) are one determinant of satisfaction. Accordingly, they have been used in numerous studies on food and consumer behaviour (Tuorila, 2007). Another widely researched aspect is the origin or provenance of food and its influence on satisfaction. For example, Stefani *et al.* (2006) highlighted the importance of knowing the origin of food and its influence on hedonic benefits in the eating experience. Origin is thought to affect consumers' assessment in two ways: either because it can be considered an indication of quality insofar as it suggests certain connotations (e.g., sensory characteristics, symbolic function), or due to ethical values, authenticity, or its ability to evoke memories of past experiences (satisfactory or otherwise). Additionally, Vad Andersen and Hyldig (2015) concluded that multiple factors are likely to contribute to food satisfaction (the hedonic and/or sensory ones being the most highly valued), and that the importance of each factor is different for each person. Vad Andersen *et al.* (2017) corroborated that the hedonic sensory experience is the most important factor for food satisfaction and that post-consumption sensations can also contribute to it.

Finally, some studies have focused on assessing consumer satisfaction with food purchases based on the retail format (Carpenter and Moore, 2006; Kamran-Disfani *et al.*, 2017).

Food retailers should thus understand these differences in order to create retail formats and offer products with values that allow them to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This is especially true given that, as a result of the highly heterogeneous nature of consumers' expectations, satisfaction can vary depending on both the values offered by the food purchases and the type of

establishment (Huddleston *et al.*, 2009). Based on these ideas, the following research hypotheses can be proposed regarding the expected influence of food values on both purchase satisfaction and satisfaction with the establishment:

H1. Food values have a positive influence on satisfaction.

As this satisfaction can refer both to the purchase and to the retail establishment where it is made, this hypothesis can be further divided into the following two sub-hypotheses:

H1a. Food values have a positive and significant influence on purchase satisfaction.

H1b. Food values have a positive and significant influence on establishment satisfaction.

Loyalty is also an undoubtedly important variable in consumers' post-purchase processes. In general, customer loyalty is understood as the buyer's overall attachment, or deep commitment, to a product, service, brand, or organisation (Oliver, 1999). The concept of loyalty has a similar meaning to that of relational commitment, which is usually described in the relationship marketing literature as an enduring desire to stay in a valuable relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The relevant literature shows that whilst the study of loyalty has been approached from many perspectives, the most common are the behavioural and attitudinal perspectives (Dick and Basu, 1994). The former conceptualises loyalty as repeat purchasing behaviour. According to this perspective, people may repeat purchases out of habit due to the existence of barriers to switching providers or a lack of attractive alternatives. Thus, customers may stay in the relationship out of obligation, developing a sort of spurious loyalty (i.e., without ever developing feelings toward the provider or supplier) (Picón *et al.*, 2014). The latter perspective, the attitudinal approach, describes loyalty as a psychological state (affective and/or cognitive), which the customer can achieve as a result of the company's relational strategy. Under this approach, the customer may maintain the relationship based on the benefits received whilst it lasts. This approach is based on the idea that true loyalty is a positive attitude toward the company. Therefore, a positive attitude toward the provider or supplier is what ensures repeat purchases in the future. From this perspective, unlike in the previous type of relationship, customers are loyal because they truly wish to maintain the relationship (Oliver, 1999). The present paper refers to these two perspectives.

Although customer satisfaction has long been commonly considered a clear antecedent of loyalty, some authors (e.g., Mital and Lassar, 1998) have shown that a satisfied customer is not always a loyal one. These authors base their argument on two possible reasons: (1) a dissatisfied customer may continue to buy the same brand or go to the same store if she cannot find anything better among the available alternatives; and (2) a satisfied customer may be willing to purchase new brands or go to a new provider in the hopes of achieving more favourable results. In light of these ideas, the following hypothesis regarding the positive influence that satisfaction is expected to have on loyalty can be formulated:

H2. Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

However, since satisfaction can refer to both the purchase and the retail establishment where the purchase is made, the foregoing hypothesis can be divided into the following two sub-hypotheses:

H2a. Purchase satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

H2b. Establishment satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

Finally, the present research also seeks to measure the influence that satisfaction, with both the purchase and the establishment, is likely to have on switching-cost variables. In the field of marketing, switching barriers generally refer to the difficulties that dissatisfied customers must overcome to switch to another provider or supplier; they may also include the financial, social and psychological burden borne by the customer when he or she switches to another establishment (Fornell, 1992). Therefore, the higher the switching barrier, the more a customer will feel he or she has no choice but to remain loyal to a retail establishment. Switching costs can be defined as the cost incurred when switching from one retail establishment to another, including time, money, and psychological costs (Dick and Basu, 1994). This definition could also include the perceived risk, insofar as there are also potential losses when switching establishments, including financial, social, psychological, and safety-related losses (Murray, 1991).

With regard to the role of switching costs in the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, some studies consider switching costs to be an antecedent of loyalty (e.g., Aydin *et al.*, 2005). In fact, Kotler (1997) indicated that switching costs play a key role in the process of building customer loyalty, noting that there are two main ways to retain customers: increasing the satisfaction level and increasing the switching

costs. Likewise, some authors (e.g., Dagger and David, 2012) suggest that switching costs have a moderating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, arguing that the impact of satisfaction on loyalty is much greater when switching costs are lower (Bell *et al.*, 2005). This argument assumes that customers' decision to remain loyal to a supplier depends on how he or she evaluates the switching costs. Switching to another retail establishment or brand would entail both a cognitive and behavioural effort.

Satisfied customers are generally understood to have less motivation to seek and evaluate other alternatives (Liu, 2006). This is consistent with the work of authors such as Pick and Eisend (2014), who argued that the perceived quality of a relationship and a company's offer are positively related to switching costs. Additionally, Oliver (1999) suggests that satisfaction is a necessary step in the loyalty-building process, but that it becomes less significant when other mechanisms (e.g., social or personal ties) are influencing that loyalty. All these factors create switching costs that increase customer retention. Matzler *et al.* (2015) also found a positive relationship between satisfaction and switching costs, establishing that switching costs have a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship. Furthermore, customer satisfaction enables greater identification with the brand and the supplier, which increases the switching costs (Matzler *et al.*, 2015).

This mediating effect is also analysed by De Matos *et al.* (2009), who conclude that different types of relationships (direct, partially mediated, totally mediated, and moderated) can be established between satisfaction, switching costs, and loyalty and that switching costs can thus act differently depending on the context within the satisfaction-loyalty relationship (i.e., depending on whether they have, for example, a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship). Additionally, Picón *et al.* (2014) corroborate that switching costs play a mediating role within this relationship and thus argue that satisfaction influences the expected perception of the costs and benefits of switching and that this perception, in turn, influences loyalty. This reasoning is grounded in the idea of opportunity costs: the higher the satisfaction, the greater the opportunity costs (or loss of satisfaction) when the customer switches (Picón *et al.*, 2014).

Based on these ideas, the following research hypotheses can be proposed regarding the potential influence that purchase satisfaction and satisfaction with an establishment are likely to have on switching costs:

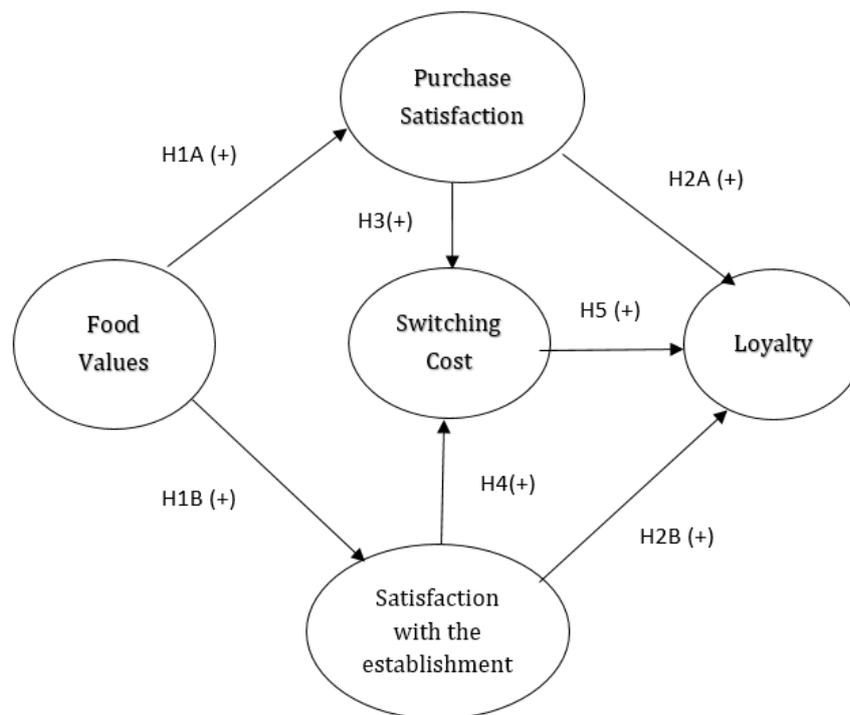
H3. Purchase satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on switching costs.

H4. Establishment satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on switching costs.

H5. Switching costs have a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

Figure 1 graphically synthesises the proposed relationships between the considered variables.

Figure 1. Proposed Model



### 5.3. Methodology

To test the model proposed in Figure 1, a questionnaire was designed containing questions aimed at obtaining information about the retail establishment where the respondents had made their purchase, their socio-demographic profile, and the study variables (food values, satisfaction, loyalty, and switching costs). The scales used for the food-value variables were adapted from Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011). Specifically, the questions related to these variables focused on how important respondents considered these food values to be on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was the least important and 5 the most. In contrast, to assess satisfaction, switching costs, and loyalty, 5-point Likert scales were used. These items were adapted from Kamran-Disfani *et al.* (2017).

Over the month of April 2017, 708 online questionnaires were collected in the city of Albacete (Spain). The questionnaires were distributed amongst shoppers over the age of 18 who lived in the city and had previously made their purchase at a consumer-goods establishment in the city.

### 5.3.1. Descriptive analysis

A total of 708 valid questionnaires were collected, with regard to which 63.4% of the respondents were women and 36.6% were men. A total of 69.5% of the respondents had a monthly income of up to 1,200 euros, followed by 19.8% with a monthly income of up to 1,800 euros. About 76.7% of the respondents were single or had a partner but no children, whilst 23.3% had children. A total of 52.1% were aged 23 or under, and 29.1% were aged 33 or under. With regard to educational attainment, 44.2% had completed basic education, followed by 36.4% with university studies.

Regarding the retail establishment where the respondents had made their purchase, 68.78% had shopped at a supermarket, while 16.80% had shopped at a discount store (i.e., 85.59% of the sample was concentrated in these two retail formats).

The items used to test the model had scores above the mean. With regard to the different groups of variables, the scores for the food-value scale were above the mean and even, for many items, above 3.5. Specifically, the food-value scales with the highest mean scores were, in order, 'taste' and 'extent to which food does not cause illnesses'. In contrast, the scales with the lowest mean scores were for the values referring to the 'extent to which all parties involved in the trade equally benefit' and to 'where the agricultural commodities used to make the food were grown'. With regard to the purchase satisfaction variables, the highest mean score was found for the variable 'purchases made at this establishment meet my expectations', while the lowest mean score was found for the variable 'I consider the choice of this establishment to make my purchase a good one'. As for establishment satisfaction, the highest mean score was found for the variable 'satisfaction level with the retail establishment' and the lowest for 'compared to other establishments, my satisfaction level is'. As concerns loyalty, the highest mean score was found for the variable, 'I plan to continue shopping at this establishment', while the lowest was for 'Whenever possible, I recommend this establishment'. Finally, regarding switching costs, the highest average score was found for the variable 'knowledge of product location' and the lowest for 'special relationship with the employees'. See Table 1.

**Table 1. Univariate analysis**

	ITEM	Mean	Standard deviation
FOOD VALUES	Food produced without modern technologies (Naturalness)	3.57	1.07
	Taste of food (Taste)	4.37	.81
	Price of food (Price)	3.86	.96
	Food does not cause illnesses (Safety)	4.23	1.04
	Ease with which food is cooked or consumed (Convenience)	3.60	.96
	Nutritional value of food (Nutrition)	3.72	.98
	Preservation of traditional consumption patterns (Tradition)	3.24	1.08
	Where the agricultural commodities used to make the food were grown (Origin)	3.04	1.16
	Extent to which all parties involved in the trade equally benefit (Fairness)	2.87	1.16
	Extent to which the food seems appealing (Appearance)	3.85	.93
	Effect of food production on the environment (Environmental Impact)	3.22	1.10
PURCHASE SATISFACTION	Purchases made at this establishment meet my expectations	4.09	.62
	My experience with the purchases made at this establishment is satisfactory	4.03	.64
	I consider the choice of this establishment to make my purchase a good one	3.95	.76
SATISFACTION WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT	Satisfaction level with my purchases	3.98	.76
	Satisfaction level with the retail establishment	4.01	.80
	Compared to other establishments, my satisfaction level is	3.96	.7
SWITCHING COSTS	Disruption involved in switching to another establishment	2.83	1.21
	Time needed to make the purchase at another establishment	2.93	1.20
	Knowledge of product location	4	.94
	Special relationship with employees	2.23	1.22
LOYALTY	I do most of my shopping at this establishment	3.77	.99
	Whenever possible, I recommend this establishment	3.11	1.15
	I always think of this establishment as the best option	3.58	1.03
	I plan to continue shopping at this establishment	3.95	.87
	I expect my relationship with the establishment to last over time	3.58	1.04

PLS SEM was used to validate the model proposed in Figure 1. The model was estimated using SmartPLS 3.0 software. To establish the significance of the parameters, bootstrapping was performed with 10,000 resamples.

To ensure construct reliability and validity, first, the indicator loadings were examined for the reflective constructs. Those items with a loading of less than 0.7 were omitted (Hair *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, the item 'special relationship' was omitted from the switching costs construct, as it had a score of less than 0.55. The 'food values' variable was considered a formative construct. The assessment of this type of construct is based on: (1) convergent validity; (2) collinearity; and (3) the weight of each indicator (Hair *et al.*, 2017). For the measurement of the formative constructs, convergent validity was assessed through the construct's correlation with an alternative measure of the same concept (Hair *et al.*, 2017). With regard to the weights of each indicator, some items had a low score. Unlike reflective indicators, formative indicators are not interchangeable; therefore, omitting a single indicator can reduce the validity of the measurement model's content (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001).

The next step was to evaluate construct reliability and validity. The most commonly used criterion is that proposed by Jöreskog (1971), which establishes that values over the 0.7 to 0.9 range are considered good or very good. Other indicators are Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). To determine discriminant validity, the sole criterion offered by PLS was used, which verifies whether the AVE of each factor is greater than the square of the correlation between each pair of factors (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Before the structural model can be validated, it is necessary to test for collinearity. This process must be performed for both formative and reflective constructs. As all the indicators have values lower than 3, it can be concluded that there is no collinearity (Becker *et al.*, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2018). To evaluate the structural model's predictive power, the criterion proposed by Falk and Miller (1992) was used: namely, the  $R^2$  of each dependent construct must be greater than 0.1. In particular, the  $R^2$  for each construct was: .490 for Loyalty ( $Q^2=.295$ ), .203 for Purchase Satisfaction ( $Q^2=.134$ ), .141 for Establishment Satisfactin ( $Q^2=.064$ ) and .044 for Switching Costs ( $Q^2=.0024$ ).

The 'switching costs' construct had a value of less than .10. However, this result should be interpreted with caution, since its value depends on the number of the construct's predictors (Hair *et al.*, 2018).

### 5.3.2. Estimation results

Finally, once all the measurement instrument's psychometric properties had been evaluated, the model proposed in Figure 1 was estimated. The model estimation results are shown in Table 2.

Once the hypotheses had been directly tested in the model, the mediating effect of some of the study variables was analysed. Mediation refers to the presence of an intermediate variable or mechanism that transfers the effect of an antecedent variable on an outcome (Aguinis *et al.*, 2016). This gives rise to the formulation of a mediation hypothesis postulating how, or by what means, an independent variable affects a dependent variable through one or more mediating variables (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018).

**Table 2. Path coefficients**

	$\beta$	t-statistic	p value	
(H1a) Food values-----Purchase satisfaction	.451	12.205	0.000	ACCEPTED
(H1b) Food values-----Satisfaction with the establishment	.375	9.976	0.000	ACCEPTED
(H2a) Purchase satisfaction-----Loyalty	.151	3.569	0.000	ACCEPTED
(H2b) Satisfaction with the establishment-----Loyalty	.418	10.090	0.000	ACCEPTED
(H3) Purchase satisfaction-----Switching costs	.065	1.115	0.265	NO ACCEPTED
(H4) Satisfaction with the establishment-----Switching costs	.155	2.756	0.000	ACCEPTED
(H5) Switching costs-----Loyalty	.345	11.999	0.000	ACCEPTED

Most PLS-SEM studies do not consider mediating effects in their hypotheses and, therefore, do not analyse their importance in structural models (Hair *et al.*, 2016). However, there is a substantial body of literature on methods for testing mediating effects (Hayes and Scharkow, 2013). For example, in the present research, there is a type of mediation, namely, simple mediation, that occurs when there is only one mediating variable, i.e., mediation exists when the relationship between the independent and dependent variable changes as a result of the introduction of a mediating variable. This causal effect of an independent variable on the dependent one can be divided into two types of effects (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018):

- Indirect effect (AxB) through a mediator variable (M)
- Direct effect (path C')
- Total effect (direct effect + indirect effect) = C = C' + (AxB)

In the present research, to calculate the mediating effects, bootstrapping was performed. To test the indirect effects in PLS, several steps were followed (adapted from Chin, 2010). Specifically, the steps developed in Zhao *et al.* (2010) and Nitzl *et al.* (2016) were followed. First, the importance of the effect was determined by evaluating the significance of the indirect effects (AxB). To test that significance, bootstrapping was performed with 10,000 resamples. The direct effect values obtained were then multiplied.

Second, the type and magnitude of the indirect effect were determined. To this end, the variance accounted for (VAF) was calculated, which is the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect (direct effect + indirect effect) (Hair *et al.*, 2016). In other words, VAF determines the extent to which the mediation process explains the variance in the dependent variable (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, it does so as follows:

$$\text{VAF} = (\text{Indirect effect}) / (\text{Total effect})$$

$$\text{VAF} = (\text{Indirect effect}) / (\text{Direct effect} + \text{Indirect effect})$$

$$\text{VAF} > 80\% \rightarrow \text{Full mediation}$$

$$20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\% \rightarrow \text{Partial mediation}$$

$$\text{VAF} \leq 20\% \rightarrow \text{No mediation}$$

In the present case, switching costs were not found to have any mediating effect on the purchase satisfaction-loyalty relationship, as can be seen in the following formula:

$$(0.065 \cdot 0.345) / ((0.151 + (0.065 \cdot 0.345))) = 12.93\% > \text{No mediating effect}$$

Nor were switching costs found to have any mediating effect on the satisfaction establishment satisfaction-loyalty relationship:

$$(0.155 \cdot 0.345) / ((0.418 + (0.155 \cdot 0.345))) = 11.34\% > \text{No mediating effect}$$

Thus, the results obtained corroborate the model proposed in Figure 1. Support was found for all the hypotheses except H3 (referring to the purchase satisfaction-switching costs relationship).

Specifically, the data show that the strongest influence is that exerted by food values on purchase satisfaction, followed, in descending order, by the influence of: establishment satisfaction on loyalty; food values on establishment satisfaction; switching costs on loyalty; establishment satisfaction on switching costs; and establishment satisfaction on loyalty. Finally, switching costs were not found to have any mediating effect on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.

These results are consistent with the literature in this line of research, as they highlight the importance of offering a product or providing a service that satisfies the customer. This helps generate loyalty, with regard to both products and the services offered at the retail establishment. However, although these conditions are necessary, they are not enough to create true loyalty. Support was not found for the relationship proposed in hypothesis H3 (purchase satisfaction-switching costs), which could lead customers to buy the same product in another establishment. Retailers should pay careful attention to this aspect, making sure to offer products that build customer loyalty through superior quality or exclusive distribution.

#### 5.4. Discussion, conclusions, and implications

The present research has furthered understanding of the importance of food values in the post-purchase process, allowing a more in-depth exploration of consumer behaviour in the field of food and consumer goods retail. From a conceptual perspective, having considered Lusk (2011) and Lusk and Briggeman (2009) is a major advance, as those papers marked a turning point in the line of research of this paper. Amongst other things, the work of those authors opened the doors to the study of food values, as opposed to attributes, thereby enabling a more detailed analysis from a consumer perspective. It must be recalled that food values are the union of a consumer's values as a human being with what that consumer believes that any food he or she purchases or consumes should have.

The results also show that food values greatly influence customer satisfaction, with regard to both the purchase and the retail establishment. That is a necessary

first step for consumers to consider an establishment as a potential purchasing option. Interestingly, in this research, consumers placed greater importance on purchase satisfaction than establishment satisfaction. This underscores the strategy that retailers are pursuing to build customer loyalty, first, by meeting customers' needs and, second, by trying to ensure that their shelves and sales outlets are stocked with foods that take food values into account (functional foods, superfoods, dietary foods, preservative-free foods, low-calorie foods, etc.). In other words, more and more consumers are increasingly aware of the various values that food can represent and are trying to address aspects related to values such as health and wellness.

The results of the assessment of the post-purchase process are also worth highlighting. When evaluating the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, consumers placed more importance on the establishment where they made the purchase than on the products they bought there. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that a satisfied customer is not always a loyal one.

In contrast, switching costs were not found to have a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, that is, only direct effects were detected. Likewise, purchase satisfaction was not found to affect switching costs, which reinforces the idea that loyalty can sometimes be spurious. It would thus be an indicator that, as long as consumers have no other option, they will continue to shop at the establishment. In contrast, establishment satisfaction did generate switching costs. This finding could be due to aspects such as convenience, the development and maintenance of relationships with the employees, knowledge of where products are located in the store, etc.

Finally, attention should be called to the importance of the relationship between switching costs and loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural), i.e. customers may be dissatisfied with their purchase, yet still satisfied with an establishment, which could entail very high switching costs for them and, therefore, cause them to remain loyal (albeit spuriously) to the establishment. Even the descriptive analysis showed that this was the variable to receive the lowest score, which could suggest that the consumer was shopping at the establishment for convenience. It should be recalled that around 60% of the respondents were shopping at a supermarket and that the structure of this retail format is quite close to their homes, meaning the consumers might shop at multiple establishments.

These results could be due to the sample profile, since a high percentage of the respondents were consumers under the age of 35. The failure to obtain a sample with a broader age range could be due, amongst other things, to the fact that the survey had to be completed online, and, thus, respondents needed to have an e-mail address. Many consumers over the age of 54 do not have e-mail, do not use it, or are more reluctant to complete online surveys.

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## **Capítulo 6. Discusión y Conclusiones**



## 6.1. *Discusión y Conclusiones*

Como se ha visto a lo largo de esta Tesis Doctoral, el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor en el sector de la alimentación sigue siendo un tema muy destacado. Como consecuencia, esta Tesis Doctoral incluye cuatro artículos que proporcionan una mayor comprensión de los procesos de elección y comportamientos de compra y consumo de los consumidores en el sector de la alimentación, abarcando desde la restauración a los comercios minoristas de productos de alimentación.

En el primer artículo de Martínez-Ruiz y Gómez-Cantó (2016) (capítulo 2), tras una profunda revisión de la literatura, se ha analizado cómo ha evolucionado el enfoque del marketing en campos del comportamiento del consumidor, y específicamente en el ámbito de la alimentación. Partiendo de esta premisa, se ha podido observar cómo a partir del trabajo de Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y en paralelo al marketing 3.0, se han empezado a contemplar otras variables como los valores de los alimentos en vez de los atributos de los alimentos tradicionalmente considerados por la literatura, para tratar de explicar los procesos de elección y compras de los consumidores.

Estas nuevas variables, los valores de los alimentos, se reducen a once valores propuestos por Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y validados por Lusk (2011), los cuales han sido considerados como las principales variables que influyen en la elección de los productos de alimentación; y lo suficientemente amplios para abarcar toda la gama de cuestiones que tienden a impulsar las decisiones de los consumidores con respecto a los alimentos.

Respecto al segundo artículo de Gómez-Cantó et al. (2018) (capítulo 3), con el objetivo de conocer cómo evalúan los consumidores los diferentes valores de los alimentos en un contexto real de compra, se recogió una muestra de 708 consumidores quienes previamente habían realizado sus compras en distintos formatos de establecimientos minoristas de productos de gran consumo en Albacete. Tras la aplicación de diversos estadísticos descriptivos a los resultados, se observó que los valores de los alimentos más importantes para los consumidores son, en el siguiente orden, el sabor, la seguridad alimentaria, el precio y la apariencia; mientras que los menos importantes son la justicia/comercio justo (el grado en que todas las partes involucradas en el intercambio salen igualmente beneficiadas), seguido por el origen de las materias primas y los efectos de la producción en el medioambiente. Estos primeros resultados sugieren que los consumidores en general valoran en mayor

medida los aspectos hedónicos y/o utilitarios de los alimentos en detrimento de aquellos relacionados con aspectos éticos como la justicia, la sostenibilidad o el impacto medioambiental. Sin embargo, dada la heterogeneidad en las respuestas de los consumidores, se procedió a segmentar la muestra por sexo, edad y nivel de ingresos, para conocer si existían diferencias significativas entre los encuestados.

En relación a los resultados obtenidos a partir de la segmentación de la muestra, se podría decir que las mujeres, en comparación con los hombres, valoran en mayor medida todos los valores de alimentos excepto el valor conveniencia, que hace referencia a la facilidad con que un alimento es cocinado y/o consumido, y que ha resultado ser más importante para los hombres cuando eligen sus alimentos en el establecimiento. Por otra parte, cabe destacar que las mujeres prestan más atención a la apariencia del alimento antes de considerar el precio mientras que sucede lo contrario en el caso de los hombres.

En cuanto a la segmentación por edad, se ha podido observar que los consumidores más jóvenes otorgan una mayor importancia al sabor y a la apariencia de la comida mientras que los consumidores más adultos de la muestra mostraban una mayor preocupación por la seguridad alimentaria antes de considerar otros valores.

Por último, y de acuerdo al nivel de ingresos, se podría decir que los consumidores con ingresos más bajos, tras el sabor y la seguridad alimentaria se preocupan por el precio del alimento antes de barajar otras cuestiones como la nutrición, la naturalidad o la apariencia del alimento, siendo estos valores más importantes que el precio para los consumidores con rentas más altas.

Estos hallazgos pueden ayudar a los comerciantes minoristas de alimentación a comprender mejor sus segmentos de consumidores y a adaptar sus ofertas para lograr una posición competitiva en el mercado. Asimismo, los productores de alimentos se beneficiarían sin duda de la comprensión de los valores alimentarios más importantes de los consumidores, lo que les permitiría adaptar su fabricación a las necesidades y deseos de los consumidores. Los directores de comercialización podrían, por ejemplo, diseñar campañas que hagan hincapié en la superposición entre sus productos y los valores alimentarios más importantes de los consumidores a los que se dirigen. También cabe señalar que, aunque una minoría de consumidores aprecian los valores relacionados con la orientación social y la conciencia medioambiental, estos objetivos siguen constituyendo una diferenciación de mercado que merece la pena.

En resumen, este artículo reflejado en el capítulo 3 subraya los valores alimentarios clave que deberían utilizarse en futuras investigaciones, teniendo en cuenta los diferentes perfiles de los consumidores.

En relación al tercer artículo de Izquierdo-Yusta et al. (2018) (capítulo 4), el objetivo principal se centra en el estudio del comportamiento del consumidor en restaurantes de comida rápida, para cumplir con este objetivo, se recogió una muestra de 400 consumidores de comida rápida en la ciudad de Burgos. Para llevar a cabo el estudio, y comprender cómo se relacionan los valores de los alimentos de los consumidores con su comportamiento en los restaurantes de comida rápida, se unió la escala de valores de los alimentos propuesta por Lusk y Briggeman (2009) con el modelo FRL (Food-Related Lifestyle) propuesto por Grunert (1993), relacionado con los hábitos de consumo, en este caso, frecuencia de visita, acompañantes y gasto por persona. Como resultado, se identificaron tres grupos diferentes de consumidores o clústers en función de sus evaluaciones de los valores de los alimentos, de sus hábitos de consumo en los establecimientos de comida rápida, y de su satisfacción, confianza y lealtad hacia este tipo de establecimientos, dando lugar a; el grupo “principalmente utilitario” (32,45% de la muestra) que comprende a aquellos consumidores que dan una gran importancia al precio pagado por los alimentos, pero que también asignan un valor considerable a la apariencia y el sabor; el grupo “principalmente hedónico” (24% de la muestra) que dan un alto valor a todos los aspectos excepto al precio, y valoran especialmente los valores de apariencia, sabor y conveniencia; y el grupo “valores éticos” (41,5% de la muestra) que se identifican más con una serie de valores relacionados con la seguridad, el medio ambiente y la responsabilidad social, siendo los que menor importancia asignan al precio y los que más frecuentan los restaurantes de comida rápida.

Respecto a los acompañantes, los consumidores que frecuentan principalmente con sus amigos estos establecimientos pertenecen al grupo “principalmente utilitario”, mientras que los grupos “principalmente hedónicos” y “valores éticos” suelen visitar estos establecimientos con sus familias. En relación al gasto medio en el establecimiento, no se observaron diferencias significativas entre los grupos, gastando la mayor parte de la muestra entre 6 y 11 euros por persona. Y en cuanto a las variables de carácter no financiero (satisfacción, confianza y lealtad) se encontraron las siguientes diferencias:

Todos los grupos de clientes expresaron mayores puntuaciones en las variables relacionadas con la satisfacción con la comida, la satisfacción con el establecimiento y la confianza, pero menores puntuaciones en la lealtad. Lo que muestra que los clientes valoran en mayor medida las variables relacionadas con

el corto plazo (satisfacción) y el medio plazo (confianza), mientras que no consideran los restaurantes de comida rápida en el largo plazo. Así pues, los gerentes de los restaurantes pueden tener dificultades para lograr resultados a largo plazo (lealtad al establecimiento), ya que los consumidores no parecen apreciar los restaurantes de comida rápida de esa manera.

Además, las altas puntuaciones del grupo principalmente hedónico para todas las variables, junto con las bajas puntuaciones del grupo de valores éticos, refleja que la reputación de esos restaurantes puede ser contraria a los valores éticos.

De estas conclusiones se pueden extraer varias recomendaciones interesantes. Por ejemplo, todos los grupos de consumidores parecían valorar los esfuerzos de los restaurantes para proporcionarles una combinación de beneficios hedónicos y utilitarios. Por lo tanto, estos restaurantes deberían seguir aumentando o mejorando la presencia de valores relacionados con esos beneficios. Al hacerlo, estos valores pueden traducirse de la imagen del establecimiento a la imagen corporativa. Además, los gerentes deberían analizar por qué los consumidores no muestran una verdadera lealtad al establecimiento a largo plazo, a pesar de su comportamiento rutinario de visitar repetidamente la tienda. Es importante comprender los límites reales de la atracción de clientes leales, que son fundamentales para la supervivencia a largo plazo del establecimiento.

Una forma de fomentar la lealtad de los clientes podría ser abordar la brecha del mercado entre los restaurantes de comida rápida y los clientes de "valores éticos". Esos consumidores podrían descubrir un mayor interés en visitar los restaurantes de comida rápida si muestran una mayor preocupación por el medio ambiente y la responsabilidad social. En este sentido, las campañas publicitarias centradas únicamente en la calidad sanitaria de los alimentos podrían ser subóptimas para atraer a este segmento de clientes. Sin embargo, para atraer a esos clientes se requerirá no sólo una mejor comunicación, sino también una innovación incremental mediante el desarrollo de, por ejemplo, comidas más sanas y un mayor activismo ambiental.

Cabe añadir que los clientes "principalmente hedónicos" otorgaron una importancia sustancial (en relación con los otros dos grupos) a la cuestión de la confianza, en particular en lo que respecta a la prestación del servicio. Desde una perspectiva comercial, esto sugiere que los restaurantes deberían adoptar medidas específicas para aumentar la confianza. Esas medidas podrían incluir

el suministro de más información sobre las calorías y los valores nutricionales, ya que es ahí donde se han identificado las mayores asimetrías de información.

Por último, encontramos que la satisfacción del cliente no contribuye de manera significativa a la lealtad del cliente, al menos en este contexto. De hecho, los consumidores preocupados por la salud, el medio ambiente y la responsabilidad social eran los menos leales y, sin embargo, el 58,43% de ellos frecuentaban este tipo de restaurantes de comida rápida varias veces a la semana o más. Este hallazgo coincide con el de Carpenter (2008), quien estableció que el comportamiento de los consumidores puede repetirse más por necesidad. La alta frecuencia con que un cliente compra un producto puede deberse más a la falta de alternativas atractivas que a una actitud de lealtad (Hobbs y Rowley, 2008). En otras palabras, en el contexto de esta investigación, pueden estar frecuentando el restaurante sin una verdadera lealtad a la marca basada en el afecto o la intención de lealtad (Oliver, 1997). Esto puede representar una oportunidad convincente para las empresas de la industria, que deberían así trabajar para desarrollar o aumentar la práctica de producción y distribución de iniciativas relacionadas con estos aspectos.

Para finalizar, y en relación al último artículo de Izquierdo-Yusta et al. (en prensa) (Capítulo 5), se ha llevado a cabo una exploración más profunda del comportamiento del consumidor en el ámbito de la venta minorista de productos de gran consumo, lo que ha permitido una mayor comprensión de la importancia de los valores de los alimentos en el proceso posterior a la compra.

Desde una perspectiva conceptual, el hecho de haber considerado a Lusk y Briggeman (2009) y Lusk (2011) es un gran avance, ya que esos trabajos marcaron un punto de inflexión en esta línea de investigación, y como consecuencia, la labor de esos autores abrió las puertas al estudio de los valores de los alimentos, en contraposición a los atributos de los mismos, permitiendo así un análisis más detallado desde la perspectiva del consumidor.

Los resultados obtenidos a partir de este trabajo muestran que los valores de los alimentos influyen en gran medida en la satisfacción del consumidor, tanto en lo que respecta a la compra como al establecimiento de venta al por menor donde se lleva a cabo dicha compra. Ese es un primer paso necesario para que los consumidores consideren un establecimiento como una posible opción de compra. Pero resulta interesante destacar que, en esta investigación, los consumidores dieron más importancia a la satisfacción con la compra que a la satisfacción con el establecimiento. Esto pone de relieve la estrategia que los

minoristas están siguiendo para fidelizar a los clientes, en primer lugar, satisfaciendo sus necesidades y, en segundo lugar, tratando de asegurar que sus lineales y puntos de venta estén llenos de alimentos que tengan en cuenta los valores de los alimentos (alimentos funcionales, superalimentos, alimentos dietéticos, alimentos sin conservantes, alimentos bajos en calorías, etc.). En otras palabras, cada vez más consumidores son conscientes de los diversos valores que pueden representar los alimentos y tratan de abordar aspectos relacionados con valores como la salud y el bienestar.

Sin embargo, los resultados de la evaluación del proceso posterior a la compra, y específicamente al evaluar la relación satisfacción-lealtad, los consumidores dieron más importancia al establecimiento donde realizaron la compra que a los productos que compraron allí. Este hallazgo es consistente con investigaciones previas que han demostrado que un cliente satisfecho no siempre es un cliente leal.

Por el contrario, no se encontró que los costes de cambio tuvieran un efecto mediador en la relación satisfacción-lealtad, es decir, sólo se detectaron efectos directos. Asimismo, no se encontró que la satisfacción con la compra afectara a los costes de cambio, lo que refuerza la idea de que la lealtad puede ser a veces espuria. Así pues, sería un indicador de que, mientras el consumidor no tenga otra opción, seguirá comprando en el establecimiento. En cambio, la satisfacción con el establecimiento sí que generó costes de cambio. Este hallazgo podría deberse a aspectos como la conveniencia, el desarrollo y mantenimiento de las relaciones con los empleados, el conocimiento de la ubicación de los productos en la tienda, etc.

Por último, cabe señalar la importancia de la relación entre los costes de cambio y la lealtad (actitudinal y comportamental), es decir, que los clientes pueden estar insatisfechos con su compra y, sin embargo, seguir estando satisfechos con un establecimiento, lo que podría entrañar para ellos costes de cambio muy elevados y, por lo tanto, hacer que sigan siendo leales (aunque sea de manera espuria) al establecimiento. Incluso el análisis descriptivo mostró que ésta era la variable que recibía la puntuación más baja, lo que podría sugerir que el consumidor estaba comprando en el establecimiento por conveniencia. Cabe recordar que alrededor del 60% de los encuestados estaban comprando en un supermercado y que la estructura de este formato de venta al por menor está bastante cerca de sus hogares, lo que significa que los consumidores podrían comprar en múltiples establecimientos.

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**ANEXO**

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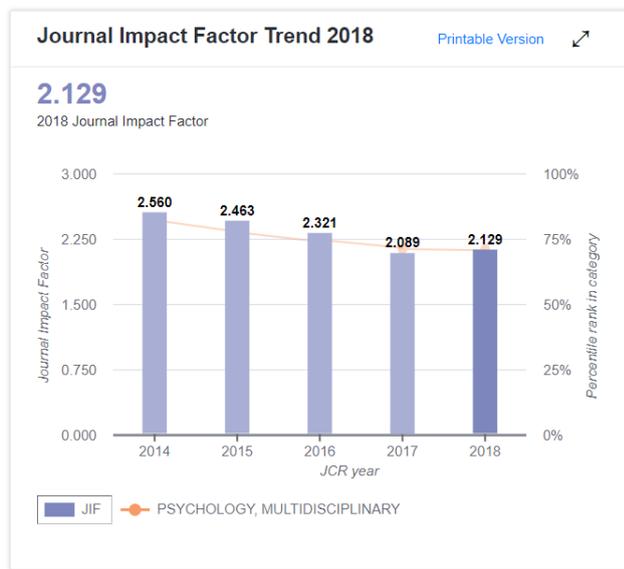


## ÍNDICE DE IMPACTO

### Artículo original

Key External Influences Affecting Consumers' Decisions Regarding Food

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**Rank**

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	Rank	Quartile	JIF Percentile
2018	40/137	Q2	71.168
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2015	29/129	Q1	77.907
2014	23/129	Q1	82.558

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# Key External Influences Affecting Consumers' Decisions Regarding Food

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Among the numerous internal and external forces that compete for consumers' attention in the context in which they buy their food, this paper will seek to provide a review of the most important external influences, such as the variables related to food itself. To this end, in addition to the food attributes traditionally identified in fields such as consumer behavior, it will give special consideration to the classification of food values. Although the influence of these variables on consumer decisions depends on the individual, analyzing them will undoubtedly increase understanding of consumers' decisions. Additionally, identifying and describing these variables will enable subsequent research on how they influence both consumer behavior and other key outcomes for producers, manufacturers, and retailers in the food industry, such as satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.

**Keywords:** food products, food values, consumer research, decision making

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## INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed a number of changes in the buying habits and behaviors consumers have traditionally shown when purchasing food products (Pieniak et al., 2010; De Moura et al., 2012; Deloitte, 2015). To understand these changes, it is necessary to take into account the large number of forces, both internal (e.g., prior experience) and external (e.g., characteristics of the food products themselves), that compete for consumers' attention in the context in which they make their decisions (c.f. Garber et al., 2003; Mowen and Minor, 2003; Logue, 2015). Although the extent to which these influences ultimately affect consumers' buying behavior will depend on the individual, analyzing them will undoubtedly increase understanding of consumers' purchase decision processes with regard to food and, thus, facilitate proper planning for producers, manufacturers, and retailers in the food industry.

Consumer research is particularly difficult for food, among other things, because of the especially subtle and complex nature of food products as stimuli at points of purchase and during consumption (Garber et al., 2003). Consequently, among other external influences to receive attention, the relevant literature has focused in particular on variables related to food products themselves (Garber et al., 2003; Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; Lusk, 2011). Unsurprisingly, there is thus increasing interest in the field in trying to identify which food-related variables exert the strongest influence on consumer behavior (Deloitte, 2015; Logue, 2015).

Drawing on these ideas, this paper offers a synthetic review of those food variables that the relevant literature has identified as key external influences, including the latest developments. Specifically, it will address the research on food attributes and the food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), a significant development in the research in this field. The identification and

description of these variables is of great interest to enable subsequent work in this area, since: (i) it sheds light on which food variables have generally been considered key and should be taken into consideration in future research; and (ii) it facilitates the subsequent analysis of potential influences on and interrelations with various stages of the food-purchase decision process, as well as on other key results for retailers in the consumer goods industry, both financial (sales and profitability) and non-financial (satisfaction, trust, and loyalty).

## FOOD VARIABLES AS EXTERNAL INFLUENCES IN THE CONSUMER DECISION PROCESS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent decades, numerous studies have sought to measure consumer preferences for certain food attributes over others (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009). However, some more recent work, such as that by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), has moved beyond the food *attributes* traditionally considered in the literature to propose a classification of food *values*, that is, a stable set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, and desired end states associated with purchasing and consuming food.

In light of the importance of both food attributes and food values as external influences affecting consumers' purchase decision processes with regard to food, the following sections will first review the food attributes generally considered in the relevant literature, in order to then use that discussion as a starting point to describe food values.

### Product Attributes

Product attributes provide a basis both for marketers to differentiate and position existing products apart from those of their competitors and for the development of new products. This may be done based on a specific attribute or range of attributes or on several attributes at once (Belch and Belch, 1995; González-Benito et al., 2010).

A product's attributes influence consumers' product choices and are able to play a variety of roles (informational, communicative, symbolic, etc.). Industry operators must know what value consumers attach to those attributes, as well as how they factor into the purchase decision process. Moreover, companies must endow their products with the right level of attributes to meet consumers' expectations, without neglecting related managerial decisions, usually involving resource-allocation, cost, and price-setting considerations. Also, although decades ago the earliest work in the field tended to take into account only quantifiable product attributes that were objectively measurable, such as price, more recently, researchers have begun to include more subjective attributes in their work, such as quality (e.g., Kotler and Keller, 2012).

This broader and relatively more recent view of product attributes including attributes that are not only of an objective

and measurable nature is clearly on display in the literature on food products. Indeed, until fairly recently, when choosing a given food product, consumers barely considered other types of issues, such as those related to good farming practices, food safety during the production process, nutritional quality, or the convenience or ease with which the product could be prepared and consumed (Berné and Martínez, 2007). In contrast, today's consumers have more and more information on these aspects and are thus more demanding when choosing the food they want to purchase. For instance, Robinson (2002) found that consumers supported sustainably produced food, although, paradoxically, they were not particularly likely to purchase it.

Nutritional aspects also generate considerable interest among end consumers, influencing their food choices. Consumers use this information to determine what nutrients they ingest, which largely affects their health (Kissileff and Van Itallie, 1982). In this regard, in their analysis of consumer orientations toward the health and hedonic characteristics of food products, Roininen et al. (1999) identified three health-related factors—general health interest, light product interest, and natural product interest—and three taste-related factors—craving for sweet foods, using food as a reward, and pleasure. They also found that women were more interested in health- and taste-related aspects than men, and that young people were less concerned with health and more interested in taste than older consumers.

Recent research by Deloitte (2015) confirmed the growing relevance of health-related attributes to consumers' food purchase decisions, noting that taste, price, and convenience are no longer the sole drivers of consumers' food and beverage purchases. The study further found that, in addition to these traditional drivers, more than half of American consumers now weigh the following drivers in their purchase decisions too: health and wellness, safety, social impact, experience, and transparency.

Food buying and consumption behavior has been widely studied from a psychological perspective, making it possible to focus on certain attributes over others (Logue, 2015). For instance, focusing on food reward, Berridge (1996) found that food consumption may be influenced by, among other things, certain taste-related psychological aspects, derived from the pleasure of the act of eating and the pleasantness of a food's taste.

Other lines of research in this area conducted from a psychological perspective include (Logue, 2015): (i) how people detect flavors; (ii) why people prefer some food to others; (iii) how people end up choosing certain foods over others; and, more specifically, (iv) how and why certain foods are able to influence consumers' choice behavior. All have considered numerous and diverse food attributes, to which they assign varying degrees of importance. Finally, from a perspective that transcends psychology, food provides people with opportunities to communicate and engage in a variety of socialization processes, allowing them to express and maintain their lifestyles, which are often linked to their individual cultures (Atkins and Bowler, 2001; Logue, 2015).

## Food Values

To understand how consumers evaluate food attributes and how they impact in the purchase decision process, it is particularly relevant to consider the article of Lusk and Briggeman (2009), who, in a key contribution, moved beyond the simple consideration of traditional food attributes. Although this work was published in the area of agricultural economics, the proposed values were developed based on a profound literature review on food preferences and human values, which enables to recognize these values as a cornerstone contribution in fields such as marketing and consumer behavior. Without doubt these values are closely related to the advent of the values-driven era (Marketing 3.0), that highlights the need to take care of customers not as mere consumers but as complex and multi-dimensional human beings with minds, hearts, and spirits. Because under this philosophy, customers choose those companies and products that satisfy their deepest needs for economic, social, and environmental justice (Kotler et al., 2010).

Rather than estimating consumers' preferences for certain specific food products and attributes, which consumers might have little knowledge of and/or experience with, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) identified a set of food values or meta-attributes for which people might have better-defined preferences in order to gain greater insight into why consumers choose certain food products or attributes over others. To this end, these authors conducted a thorough review of the relevant literature on consumers' willingness to pay for food products and human values, which allowed them to apply the concept of overall life value, previously defined in pioneering work such as Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992), to food. They were thus able to identify a set of food values likely to remain relatively stable over time. The aim was not merely to identify food attributes per se, but rather to identify more abstract attributes, consequences and end states of food consumption that might be applied to explain consumers' choices between a wide range of foods.

Specifically, they identified the following values (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009):

- Naturalness, i.e., the extent to which food is produced without modern technologies;
- Taste, i.e., the extent to which consumption of food is appealing to the senses;
- Price, i.e., the amount paid for food;
- Safety, i.e., the extent to which consumption of food will not cause illness;
- Convenience, i.e., the ease with which food is cooked and/or consumed;
- Nutrition, i.e., the amount and type of fat, protein, vitamins, etc., food contains;
- Tradition, i.e., the preservation of traditional consumption patterns;
- Origin, i.e., where the agricultural commodities were grown;
- Fairness, i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in food production benefit equally;
- Appearance, i.e., the extent to which food looks appealing;
- Environmental impact, i.e., the effect of food production on the environment.

As Lusk and Briggeman (2009) explain, although some of these values may initially seem very similar to some of the classically considered food product attributes, they represent more abstract concepts, often encompassing numerous physical attributes at once. For instance, the value of nutrition can be considered more stable than a consumer's relative preferences for specific vitamin or fat contents. Likewise, while some of the proposed values, such as price, can be classified as personal (i.e., self-centered), others, such as tradition, origin, fairness, and environmental impact, can be regarded as social (i.e., society-centered).

To determine the relative importance consumers give to these attributes, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) conducted a survey of consumers in the US. They found that: (i) in general, there was significant heterogeneity across consumers in terms of the relative importance they assigned to food values; and (ii) on average, safety, nutrition, taste, and price were among the values consumers considered most important.

In a subsequent study, Lusk (2011) found that food values are significantly related to actual grocery store purchases, suggesting that the food values scale could potentially be used, among other things, to explain consumer choice and guide new product development and marketing decisions.

## DISCUSSION

This paper has offered a review of those food variables that, acting as external influences, impact consumers' food-purchase decision processes. To this end, it first addressed the food attributes traditionally considered by the relevant literature, showing that, although early research tended to focus especially on objectively measurable attributes, more recently there has been a growing trend toward including more subjective ones. Indeed, recent data have confirmed the need to include these latter types of attributes, as, in addition to assessing easily quantifiable and objective attributes such as price, consumers increasingly also weigh other attributes in their decisions, such as those related to health or wellness.

This paper also considered the eleven food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), a significant advance in the research in this field. These authors suggest that consumers have intermediary values, consisting of a stable set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, and desired end states associated with food purchases. These values are intended to represent the main values influencing food choice and be comprehensive enough to cover the full breadth of issues that tend to drive consumers' decisions with regard to food.

The synthesis provided in this paper helps pave the way for future research in the field by identifying the food variables that are generally considered to be important and should thus be taken into account. This will facilitate their inclusion in subsequent studies, for instance, on potential influences and interrelationships in different stages of the food-purchase decision process or with regard to other key outcome variables.

Finally, one limitation of this article lies in the small number of external influences considered. Future research should thus expand the review to include other external factors, as well as address internal influences.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed, have made substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Food Values and the Spanish Consumer: Evidences Obtained in Different Segments

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# Food Values and the Spanish Consumer: Evidences Obtained in Different Segments

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## Abstract

These days, consumers' food purchases revolve around a great variety of products with very diverse characteristics. In this context, it behooves retailers to understand how consumers evaluate such products in different grocery retailing stores. In this vein, the present work makes two contributions: first, we offer a brief review of the relevant literature that highlights how consumers' fundamental interest has shifted from food attributes to food values; second, we empirically analyze how consumers currently assess said food values. To accomplish the second aim, we gathered survey data among 708 Spanish consumers in April 2017 and analyzed the results using diverse descriptive statistics. We found that hedonic and utilitarian food values (i.e., taste, safety and price) are generally more important to consumers than values such as fairness, product origin, or environmental impact. Notably, these results shift based on the segment of consumer being considered. From these results, we derive numerous strategic recommendations for producers and grocery retailers.

**Keywords:** Food values; Consumer behavior; Decisions

## Introduction

To satisfy the previously proposed aims, this research has followed the subsequent methodological procedure. In the first place, an exhaustive search of academic scientific contributions was carried out around the concept of "food values", updating and complementing the contribution of the literature reviews published in this field, being particularly relevant the works of Lusk & Briggeman [1] and Lusk [2]. This process has been carried out through a series of searches through the existing database engines on the Internet (Google Scholar) and the academic collections of the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Discovery EBSCO), where full texts of several articles offered by Google Scholar can be accessed. In the search strategy, combinations of keywords were used, such as: food attributes, food values, grocery retailing, retail stores, consumer behavior. All these explorations have allowed us to find a varied source of journals dedicated to the study of food retailing.

This filter enabled us to detect the most relevant bibliography within this field, so that we obtained a set of bibliographic sources where we could perform the systematic review of the literature. The exploration of these sources allowed us to observe a variety number of journals devoted to the study of food marketing.

Accordingly, this paper is divided in two parts; the first part offers a brief review of the relevant literature based on the food attributes and values in the context of food purchases, which has made possible to identify the key variables considered by consumers when making their purchases of food in grocery retailing stores; and the second part of this paper, consists of an empirical analysis describing the results of a consumers survey in order to know the assessment that consumers make of such food values and then cover some of the gaps in the literature that concern this topic.

This topic has been chosen because of the high importance of food purchases and food in general in the life of all people. Food's transcendent importance suffuses all areas of life, from the economic to the cultural [3,4]. Unsurprisingly, the retail sector that delivers food to consumers is one of the most important sectors worldwide [5]. However, this also means that the sector is highly competitive; as a result, retailers are always searching for competitive advantages in their domain. For this reason, retailers are fundamentally interested in understanding the relationships between consumers' behaviors and their purchase decisions [6]. Consumer research seeks to supply this understanding, but it is undoubtedly complicated by the complex nature of the products themselves,

how they stimulate at the point of sale, and how consumers interact with them during consumption [7,8]. To compound matters, the last few decades have seen a remarkable change in consumers' purchasing habits and behaviors [6,9] which have particularly manifested in the retail domain.

Due to these changes, numerous researchers have begun analyzing the influence of so-called food values on consumers' decisions, rather than focusing squarely on food attributes [1], in order to understand the variables that drive consumer behavior [10]. In light of this, the present work makes two contributions: First, we offer a review of the relevant literature regarding the aforementioned shift in consumer interest from food attributes to food values. Second, using the scale of food values proposed by Lusk & Briggeman [1], we analyze the importance of said values in a real purchase context. Specifically, our empirical study involved a sample of 708 consumers who had carried out their food purchases in different types of retail formats in Spain.

### Method

The systematic review of the literature has shown that sociodemographic characteristics are not the only drivers of consumers' food purchase decisions; the attributes of food products also play an important role [8,11-13]. Through food attributes, sellers can differentiate and position their products relative to their competitors [8]. These attributes can exert their influence through various roles (e.g., informative, communicative, symbolic, etc.); thus operators in the food industry want to know how to balance consumers' expectations of these attributes with managerial factors, such as costs and logistics [8]. For this reason, the literature has traditionally focused strongly on why consumers pay more attention to some food attributes instead of others.

The earliest works published in this field only considered the physical characteristics of products [14], particularly those that are quantifiable and measurable, such as price. More recent research has focused on more subjective attributes such as quality [15,16]. This shift is part of a larger trend to study food consumption behavior from a psychological perspective [10]: Scholars have particularly focused on issues such as how individuals detect the taste of food, how they form their preferences for some products and attributes over others, as well as how and why certain food attributes influence their purchasing choices and behaviors [8]. Consequently, the consumer has been re-envisioned-from being a solo client to a complex and rational person with feelings and thus it is necessary to properly understand their needs and how to satisfy them [1,8,15,16].

In this regard, the work of Lusk & Briggeman [1] is particularly relevant. The authors undertook an exhaustive review of the literature about traditionally considered food attributes, and from that developed a classification of food values. In this way, Lusk & Briggeman [1] sought to understand how consumers assess these attributes and what impact these

attributes exert in the purchase decision [8]. Central to Lusk & Briggeman's [1] model is the "Means - End Chain" concept proposed by Gutman [17], which captures that consumers differentiate elements of food according to their personal values. In short, we can understand why consumers prefer a particular product over another by considering their most important food values.

Based on Lusk & Briggeman's [1] classification of food values, we can establish a set of beliefs about the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences, desires and final states associated with the purchase and consumption of food. The authors derived 11 food values that correspond to generic attributes, namely: Naturalness (i.e., the extent to which the food is produced without modern technologies); Taste (i.e., the extent to which the consumption of the food is appealing to the senses); Price (i.e., the price that is paid for the food); Safety (i.e., the extent to which the consumption of food will not cause illness); Convenience (i.e., the ease with which food is cooked and/or consumed); Nutrition (i.e., the amount and type of fat, protein, vitamins, etc.); Tradition (i.e., preserving traditional consumption patterns); Origin (i.e., where the agricultural commodities were grown); Fairness (i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in the production of the food equally benefit); Appearance (i.e., the extent to which food looks appealing); and Environmental Impact (i.e., the effect of food production on the environment).

At first glance, some of these values seem to be very similar to certain food attributes traditionally considered in the literature. But as Lusk & Briggeman [1] explain, these values represent more abstract concepts that often encompass numerous physical attributes at the same time. Importantly, both the attributes and the food values have been considered variables of great importance due to the influence they exert in consumer decision-making and consumption processes; Therefore, it can be said that these variables have a decisive influence on the consumer when choosing the food they want to consume [16,17].

In order to provide another empirical valuation of Lusk & Briggeman [1] and Lusk [2] proposed food values, we applied their scale to Spanish consumers in order to understand their food values. Specifically, during the month of April 2017, we collected 708 online questionnaires from residents of the city of Albacete, Spain. The questionnaires were distributed among buyers over 18 years old who had previously carried out their purchases in the city's retail stores (hypermarkets, supermarkets, discount stores, grocer's shops and traditional food markets). The majority of the respondents (69%) had made their last purchase in a supermarket, while only 1% of the sample made their last purchase in a traditional food market.

For the questionnaire, we adapted the scales of the food value variables from Lusk & Briggeman [1] and Lusk [2]. The questions asked respondents to indicate which values they considered more and less important when buying food, on an

ordinal scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) points. Afterward, we assembled their responses into a consumer database and subsequently analyzed their responses using various descriptive statistics.

## Results

In the following lines the empirical results obtained will be presented. Looking at the average of the food values, it appears that, in general, consumers place much higher value on the hedonic and utilitarian aspects of food (taste, food safety, and price) compared to the values related to equity, fairness, sustainability, and environmental impact. That said, and taking into account the variance, there was great heterogeneity in the consumers'. In order to know the most important values for different segments of consumers, we proceeded to segment the sample of respondents by sex, age and income level. To do this, the test of Levene and Anovas were calculated in order to know if potential differences for the diverse groups in the variances and means might be shown, and if there were significant differences in the consumers' responses.

Considering the segments differentiated by sex (male/female), women presented a higher average score for all food values compared to men, except for the value of convenience. This suggests that men generally prefer foods that are less complex when it comes to cooking or eating. Both men and women rated taste and safety as the first- and second-most important values, respectively; likewise, both sexes ranked origin and fairness as the least important. Notably, the third-most important value for men was the price, while women paid more attention to the appearance of the food before considering the price.

There were several worthwhile findings regarding the age segmentation of the sample. The most important food value for the youngest segment of the sample (aged between 18 and 33 years) was taste, followed by the appearance of the food; for the older adult consumers (aged 34 and above), food safety was the most important value. These results parallel those obtained by Roininen et al. [18], who argued that young people are more concerned about taste than health relative to their older peers. Meanwhile, fairness was the least-important food value for all ages of the sample. Origin of the raw materials was the second least-important value for all age groups, except those between 44 and 53 years, for whom the environmental impact was the second least-important value.

Some interesting findings also appeared among the income level segmentation. Among all income levels, taste and safety were the most important food values, while fairness and origin were the least appreciated. The one exception to this was the segment with an average income between 1,201 and 1,800 euros), for whom the least-important values were fairness, first, and environmental impact, second. Therefore, it can be said that "middle class" families exhibit the smallest concern for how their consumption impacts the environment. Meanwhile, consumers with lower incomes generally treat

price as the third-most important value, above aspects of nutrition, naturalness and appearance, but price becomes less important than those values for consumers who receive incomes above 1,800euros [19-32].

## Conclusion

Nowadays, surviving in the retail sector hinges on understanding the consumer-and specifically their behaviors, desires and needs. To assist managers in this regard, the present work adopted a double aim: First, we reviewed the relevant literature about the growing relevance of food values in driving consumers' choices. Second, we identified the most important food values among a sample of Spanish consumers and analyzed each value's respective influence over purchase decision processes.

Our literature review makes clear that marketing scholars have traditionally focused on the physical attributes of foods, and almost exclusively on those that are measurable and quantifiable, in order to explain why consumers prefer some elements over others. Most of the recent research, meanwhile, has focused on more abstract or subjective attributes that closely relate to people's general values. This shift accords with the paradigm of marketing 3.0, which sees consumers as complex human beings with feelings that they seek to satisfy through consumption.

For this reason, researchers are increasingly trying to explain consumers' buying behaviors through food values instead of specific product attributes. In this regard, Lusk & Briggeman [1] usefully advanced the field by identifying 11 food values, which served as the object of study in this work. Their proposed values, derived from a review of the literature about preferences and human values can be understood as a stable set of beliefs within consumers about the relative importance of meta-attributes, consequences, and final states associated with the food purchase. These values have been a fundamental contribution to marketing, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the issues and variables that influence consumers' food choices.

In this work, we sought to determine the relative importance that consumers assign to these values in a real context. Thus, we analyzed a sample of 708 consumers who had previously made purchases in different types of retail establishments in Spain in 2017. After applying various descriptive statistics to the results, we found that the most important values for consumers when making their purchases are taste, safety, price and appearance (in that order). In general, the least-important value is fairness (i.e., the extent to which all parties involved in the production of the food equally benefit), followed by the origin of the raw materials and the effects of food production on the environment. These empirical results suggest that consumers generally follow a hedonic and utilitarian inclination, placing relatively less importance on fairness, sustainability, and environmental impact.

Regarding the results obtained through the sample segmentation, it is worth noting that women in general have presented a higher average than the men in practically all values except that which refers to the ease with which a food is cooked or consumed, value to which the male sex pays more attention when choosing a certain food in the establishment. And the female sex pays more attention to the appearance of the food before considering the price of the same, the opposite occurs with men, who give more importance to the price than to the appearance of the food.

On the other hand, younger consumers value more the taste and appearance of a food while the more adult public shows a greater concern for its safety. And regarding the income level segmentation, it could be said that consumers with lower incomes, after taste and safety, pay more attention to the food price before considering issues related to nutrition, naturalness or the extent to which the food is produced without modern technologies, or with the appearance of food, being these aspects more important than the price for consumers who receive higher incomes.

These findings may aid retailers in better understanding their consumer segments and adapting their offers in order to gain a competitive market position. Likewise, food producers would undoubtedly benefit from understanding consumers' most important food values, which allows them to tailor their manufacturing to better suit consumers' needs and desires. Marketing managers could, for instance, design campaigns that emphasize the overlap between their products and their target consumers' most important food values. It is also worth noting that, even though a minority of consumers appreciate the values of social orientation and environmental awareness, these objectives still constitute a worthwhile market differentiation.

In short, this work underscores the key food values that future research should utilize. Subsequent studies should analyze the influence of food values on non-financial outcomes, such as consumer satisfaction, attitude, and behavioral loyalty. It would also be interesting to see whether the proposed food values can reliably predict consumers' actual purchase behaviors and beliefs, which will help to identify how consumers, as a whole, respond to changes in the composition of foods.

Some of the limitations of this work are manifested in the empirical part of it, so we encourage additional research to adopt other statistical methods, such as structural equation models, that are more robust and can reveal alternative viewpoints.

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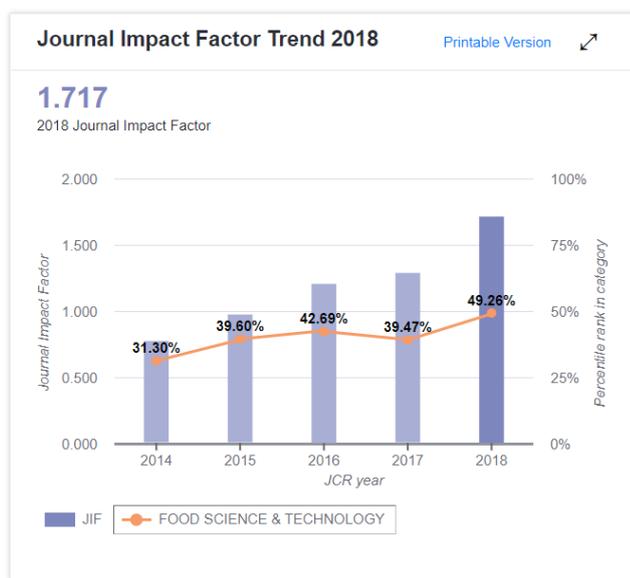
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# Consumers' behaviour in fast-food restaurants: a food value perspective from Spain

Consumers'  
behaviour in  
fast-food  
restaurants

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to understand consumers' behaviour in fast-food restaurants in Spain. To this end, the authors conducted a survey that combined a classification of food values, as proposed in the relevant literature, with a related model that links personal values to behaviour.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A sample of 400 consumers was gathered from two different, leading fast-food chains operating in Spain. With these data, respondents were grouped through hierarchical cluster analysis and *K*-measures, and in accordance with Lusk and Briggeman's (2009) food values and the food-related lifestyle model. The authors validated these clusters by means of ANOVA and discriminant analysis, which led to useful observations about inter-group differences in consumers' habits, as well as their satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

**Findings** – The results indicate that consumers can be clustered into three groups based their food values assessments: the "mainly utilitarian" group, the "mainly hedonic" group and the "ethical values" group. These groups not only demonstrate diverse habits, but also differ on key variables such as satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

**Practical implications** – The authors offer several managerial recommendations for designing and developing segmentation strategies in the fast-food industry. Any such strategies should acknowledge that all consumer groups appear to value restaurants' efforts to provide them with both hedonic and utilitarian benefits, although the extent varies across groups.

**Originality/value** – Among the relevant literature, this research is the only one that examines the existence of distinct consumer groups based on their food values assessments. In addition, this paper analyses inter-group differences in terms of both diverse consumption habits (frequency of visits, expenditure, etc.) and key marketing variables (satisfaction, trust and loyalty).

**Keywords** Values, Loyalty, Trust, Satisfaction, Cluster, Consumer habits

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the process of globalisation has led to important cultural and sociological changes that have seeped into consumers' habits and culinary preferences. For instance, today's consumers exhibit a heightened sensitivity about the food they eat, and their anxieties are wide-ranging: from the dangers of food poisoning, to the broad health impact of food (e.g. chemical additives, high fat content and the related chronic diseases), to the environmental and regulatory issues surrounding food production (Worsley and Lea, 2008). These concerns have arisen in tandem with many consumers spending less time buying and cooking their own meals (Ayechu and Durá, 2010).

In light of these developments, the restaurant industry operators are challenged to design and develop strategies tailored to specific market segments. However, the restaurant



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sector is already highly atomised: on the supply side, for instance, companies cater to very specific consumer segments (vegetarian, organic, etc.) or adapt their offer to segments with specific needs (e.g. gluten intolerance). This trend has similarly compelled producers and manufacturers to offer segment-specific products in order to better meet consumers' needs. Hence, restaurants need more refined strategies in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors and gain thorough knowledge of their customers (e.g. Kivela, 1997; Koo *et al.*, 1999).

This need is especially pronounced among fast-food restaurants, which are an increasingly important sector of the industry. As one of the most iconic forms of globalisation, fast-food restaurants have spread rapidly to major cities all over the world in response to the changing habits of urban consumers (Schroeder and McEachern, 2005; Tong and Wong, 2016; Xu, 2014). Such restaurants draw consumers for several reasons: convenience and/or time savings (Clemente-Ricolfe and Gómez-Layana, 2006); the pleasure of enjoying this type of family meal (Darian and Cohen, 1995); the positive image that they project when marketed as establishments of youthful and modern food (Fàbrega, 2004); their low price, wide schedules and service speed, or even food offerings that are healthier and more respectful towards the environment (Libremercado, 2016).

Operators can use several variables to design and develop such segmentation strategies. The common tradition has been to use socioeconomic and demographic variables such as gender, age, standard of living and education. However, there has been recent interest in new features stemming from consumers' values. Within this latter research stream, it is worth highlighting the food values scale proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009), who classified food values based on a review of the literature on food preferences and human values. Also worth noting is the food-related lifestyle (FRL) model proposed by Grunert *et al.* (1993), which tries to explain consumers' behaviour towards their food choices in terms of their individual FRLs. The FRL model effectively proposes a relationship between the product and value attainment (although such a relationship can be more or less indirect).

There are at least three strategic reasons for fast-food operators to consider this research stream: the need to identify how the health issues surrounding fast food (such as the observed relationship between its consumption and weight gain and/or obesity; Currie *et al.*, 2010) might affect consumers' perception of the firm's image; the growing need to establish long-term relationships with customers, which requires a detailed analysis of their behaviours; and the intensive competitive environment of the fast-food industry and the subsequent need for long-term survival strategies (Law *et al.*, 2004; Momtaz *et al.*, 2013).

Given the above, the present study seeks a better comprehension of the behaviours of fast-food consumers in Spain – specifically, how to achieve and/or bolster their satisfaction with, trust in and loyalty towards this type of store. This research hopes to provide managers with a greater understanding of different consumer segments and their respective food values – and further, how these values relate to satisfaction, trust and loyalty. With this intention in mind, we adopted Lusk and Briggeman's (2009) food values classification, which reflects many of the previously mentioned tendencies and is consistent with the precepts of the FRL model, to classify fast-food consumers into different clusters. This will enable us to investigate significant differences in those clusters' habits and non-financial metrics (satisfaction, trust and loyalty). Based on the results, we will propose a series of recommendations for the managers of fast-food restaurants.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 The relevance of values

As previously pointed out, the past few decades have seen several shifts in how people purchase and consume food. In order to sustain a competitive advantage, fast-food business managers need to understand the aspects that guide consumer preferences and then

incorporate those aspects in their marketing strategies (Abdullah *et al.*, 2011). It is in this vein that the work of Lusk and Briggeman (2009) becomes especially useful. Their paper developed a classification of food values, reflecting a set of beliefs regarding the relative importance of the meta-attributes, consequences and desired end-states associated with purchasing and consuming food. Having built the values upon a deep literature review on food preferences and human values, the authors created a system that recognises consumers as complex and multi-dimensional (Martínez-Ruiz and Gómez-Cantó, 2016). Indeed, these values encompass most of the previously highlighted aspects, such as the growing concern for nutrition (nutrition and safety values), the natural environment (environmental impact value), social justice (fairness, origin, tradition and naturalness values) and whose consumption evokes feelings and provides experiences (appearance, taste and convenience values). By considering these values, fast-food restaurants may be able to develop better segmentation strategies.

In the food research domain, it is common to see values linked to consumers' lifestyles. One of the commonly used models in this field is Grunert's (1993) FRL model, which relates to the systems of cognitive categories, scripts and their associations, which relate a set of food products to a set of values (Grunert *et al.*, 1993). The system of cognitive structures that the FRL contains is assumed to include different kinds of cognitive schemas related to food, purchase motives and food quality aspects, as well as broad cognitive scripts related with cooking methods, ways of shopping and consumptions situations (Grunert *et al.*, 1993).

The FRL and food values scale overlap in a few ways. For one, the model proposes a relationship between the food product and value attainment (although this relationship could be indirect depending on the product, the usage situation and the way that food products are transformed into meals) (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1990). This relationship reflects consumers' freedom in how they try to use food products to attain values and difficulties that the consumer chooses food products directed by expected value attainment. Second, the desired higher-order product attributes that underpin the FRL model refers to attributes that may apply to food products in general, such as natural, nutritious, convenient, etc. These latter attributes are considered by the values proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009).

## 2.2 The customer–business relationship

Businesses exist and compete to create satisfied customers (Anderson and Fornell, 2000). Investors are attracted to companies that excel at satisfying their customers, as those firms recognise that the amount of goods or services they produce matters less than convincing customers to return. In the restaurant industry, providing a variety of fresh, healthy food remains an important criterion for satisfying customers (Qin *et al.*, 2010), but companies must also offer dining experiences that combine tangible and intangible elements in order to meet or exceed customers' expectations (Tarn, 1999).

In the past, when fast-food companies were more novel, they could satisfy customers simply through tangible offerings (i.e. the food itself). However, people have become more gastronomically sophisticated, and consequently, they have become more demanding about their dining expectations. For example, newer generations are shifting away from the traditional towards the new, the innovative and the exciting – all of which are intangible qualities. While 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-lasting emotions and memories (Zopiatis and Pribic, 2007).

This trend towards the novel and intangible is largely driven by younger consumers, perhaps indicating the importance they attribute to hedonic (i.e. subjective and individualistic) consumption. Hedonic consumption provides these consumers with joy

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and pleasure (Irani and Heidorzaden, 2011) through the multisensorial, fantasy and emotional aspects derived from their experience with the product (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). In the context of fast-food restaurants, such hedonic benefits might be derived from the food's good taste, among other features (Maehle *et al.*, 2015). The flip side of hedonic consumption is utilitarian consumption, which is more "rational" and focussed towards an objective (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). This implies that consumers acquire products in an efficient way and for a functional purpose (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998). In the fast-food context, utilitarian benefits might take the form of low prices, for example (Maehle *et al.*, 2015).

In practice, though, the majority of products seek to provide a combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit with different degrees of emphasis. However, consumers frequently consider the majority of products as exclusively hedonic or utilitarian (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Fuljahn and Moosmayer, 2011). For this reason, Ryu *et al.* (2010) divided fast-food customers based on whether they professed a hedonic or utilitarian motivation for patronising such restaurants. This research found 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.

Based on the above, restaurateurs should seek to improve customers' perceptions of both hedonic and utilitarian values to ensure satisfaction and encourage positive behaviours and emotions, such as returning to the restaurant or talking positively about their dining experience. 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).

In order to enact this strategy, companies need to build trust built with consumers, which is required for positive outcomes such as customer loyalty, retention, purchase intention, willingness to act and overall market performance (Erdem and Swait, 2004).

However, most of the extensive research on brand trust has focussed more on the results of trust (e.g. loyalty and repeat business) than its predictors. For instance, Jacoby and Chesnut (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. Earlier studies often pursued the former approach: Dick and Basu (1994), for example, defined loyalty as the relationship between the "relative attitude" towards an entity (brand/store/vendor) and "patronage behaviour". However, more recent studies have adopted an attitudinal approach (De Ruyter *et al.*, 1998) in order to provide a fuller picture.

Still, there is a largely answered question about what builds trust in consumers. With a focus on the service sector, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) suggested that trust arises for clients when they feel secure with how they are treated and trust that any information they might provide will be kept confidential. Several authors have since translated this issue of perceived service quality to the fast-food industry, finding that factors such as food taste, establishment cleanliness, service speed and staff friendliness impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Qin and Prybutok, 2009a, b; Qin *et al.*, 2010). Price and nutritional value are gaining increasing importance, though (Kara *et al.*, 1995), as are convenient operating hours. With regard to food products, trust is closely linked to other basic marketing concepts such as safety, nutrition and health. Trust is also a potentially important factor in consumers' purchasing behaviour towards food products (Bredahl, 2001). Consumers sometimes lose their trust in the food production chain and fear that their health could be seriously compromised (cf. Worsley and Lea, 2008), and then it might become necessary to restore said trust. Such considerations are crucial for companies trying to gain customer loyalty and expand their persistent customer base.

In any case, it is clear that consumer trust, loyalty and satisfaction are interconnected constructs. For instance, several studies have determined that high customer satisfaction and service quality result in higher customer loyalty and a willingness to recommend a firm to another person (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding *et al.*, 1993; Rust and Oliver, 1994). Likewise, 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. By defining loyalty in terms of purchase frequency and amount spent per order or visit, Kendrick (1998) effectively implied that customers must be satisfied in order to become loyal to and profitable for a company. Bowen and Chen (2001) corroborated this argument in their study on the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction, finding a positive correlation between loyal customers and profitability. Similarly, Kumar and Shah (2004) noted that customer loyalty is an important part of developing relationships that increase business and promote retention.

Relatedly, many researchers have provided empirical evidence for a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions such as returning to an establishment or recommending it to friends – all of which have obvious implications for profitability (Ryu *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, high levels of satisfaction have the collateral effect of reducing the amount of money that needs to be invested in attracting new customers, as loyal customers effectively fill that role for free (Lovelock and Wright, 2002).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Data collection

In order to collect the data, we developed a structured questionnaire that intended to gather all the necessary information for the research. In order to keep the sampling error below 5 per cent, we conducted 400 personal surveys at the exit of different McDonald's and Telepizza establishments located in the city of Burgos (Spain) in 2013. We selected these fast-food chains because McDonald's is the leading fast-food chain in Spain, and Telepizza is one of the Spanish-originating brands that has achieved a consolidated image and global coverage. We chose the city of Burgos because its population size is fairly representative of most Spanish cities (Caixabank Research, 2014). 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. The survey was voluntary and completely anonymous, and consumers did not receive any kind of incentive (Table I).

#### 3.2 Empirical research

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 doing so, marketing managers are likely to reach their target market(s) far more effectively and efficiently, and thereby better satisfy their customers' needs.

Universe	Consumers of fast-food restaurants over the age of 18 (September–October 2013)
Sample unit	Consumer of fast-food restaurants over the age of 18 (September–October 2013)
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

**Table I.**  
Technical details

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We utilised a sequential process to meet the objectives of determining, analysing and characterising consumer groupings at fast-food restaurants. First, we built upon the food values identified by Lusk and Briggeman (2009) to form user groups through hierarchical cluster analysis and *K*-measures. In a second phase, we validated these clusters by means of ANOVA and discriminant analysis. In a third and final phase, we performed parametric and non-parametric tests to uncover the existence of inter-group differences in terms of satisfaction, trust, loyalty and consumer habits.

### 3.3 Results and discussion

In the hierarchical cluster analysis, we used squared Euclidean distance as the measure of proximity and the Ward method as the classification algorithm. This produced a dendrogram that allowed us to determine the number of clusters and the centroids, which was necessary to apply the *K*-means method. We obtained a total of three clusters, which were validated by both ANOVA and discriminant analysis. The ANOVA results reflect the existence of inequality of means between the groups (see Table II).

The following paragraphs offer a brief description of the groups. The clusters were formed by taking the average values of the variables, which are shown in Table II:

- Group 1. Mainly utilitarian: people in this group place importance on the price paid for food. They also attach considerable value to appearance and taste. They gave the remaining values lower scores than the other respondents. A total of 34.5 per cent of the sample belonged to this group. Although these consumers emphasise values related to both utilitarian and hedonic benefits, we coded this group as “mainly utilitarian” due to the high relevance they assigned to price.
- Group 2. Mainly hedonic: accounting for 24 per cent of the sample, this group comprises those consumers who value all aspects highly except for price. Like Group 1, these consumers place a high emphasis on values related to both utilitarian and hedonic benefits, but we coded this group as mainly hedonic due to the high importance placed on appearance, taste (especially with respect to Group 3) and convenience (especially with respect to Group 1).
- Group 3. Ethical values: The people in this group were the least concerned about the price, taste and appearance, and instead identified with a range of values related to health, the environment and social responsibility (for simplicity’s sake, we will jointly refer to them as “values”). They also emphasised aspects such as naturalness,

**Table II.**  
Mean values of the variables between groups and the ANOVA

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

**Note:** \*Level of significance < 0.001

nutrition, origin, tradition, environmental impact, safety and fairness. This group accounted for the largest share of users (41.5 per cent).

The multiple discriminant analysis revealed the existence of differences in means between the groups (i.e. the equality of means). In addition, low Wilks'  $\lambda$  values were observed. The  $\chi^2$  associated with the Wilks'  $\lambda$  means that the hypothesis of differences in the scores given to the independent variables between the consumer groups can be accepted.

Box's M test showed that the  $F$ -statistic was 2.85, with a significance level of 0.0001. With this, we can reject the null hypothesis that the variance-covariance matrices present no statistically significant differences between the groups of clients. Finally, the confusion matrix shows that 96.8 per cent of the originally grouped cases were correctly classified. All of the above confirms that the three clusters obtained were different and correctly identified.

In general, the analysis corroborates earlier findings (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Fuljahn and Moosmayer, 2011) that all consumer groups appreciate fast-food restaurants' efforts to provide them with some combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit to varying extents.

Table III shows the differences in the three clusters' consumer habits in terms of the variables previously reviewed (e.g. Kendrick, 1998).

In general, the customers from the sample were heavy fast-food restaurant users: 73.5 per cent ate at such restaurants one or more times a week. Nonetheless, the groups exhibited profound differences in usage: The "mainly utilitarian" consumers were the least likely to patronise this type of restaurant, while consumers in the other two groups ate at them several times a week or even every day. It is notable that those clients least sensitive to price (the "ethical values" group) were also the most likely to eat at fast-food restaurants. In line with the practical recommendations of Anderson and Miroso (2014), this latter finding might indicate that, amidst some restaurant operators' efforts to present a "healthier" image, some consumers may perceive them as quick service restaurants with healthy food options.

With regard to dining companions, the customers in the sample generally went to the restaurants with their friends, family or partners (82.5 per cent in all). Of the rest, 10.25 per cent went alone and 7.25 per cent went with colleagues from work. In terms of between-group differences, those who ate with friends were mainly from the "mainly

## Consumers' behaviour in fast-food restaurants

Variable	%	$\chi^2$	Percentages by groups		
			Mainly utilitarian	Mainly hedonic	Ethical values
<i>Frequency of visit</i>		$p < 0.001$			
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
<i>Companions</i>		$p = 0.024$			
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
<i>Expenditure per person</i>		$p = 0.258$			
Less than 6 euros	21.50		23.91	18.75	21.08
From 6–11 euros	44.50		46.38	46.88	41.57
From 12–17 euros	24.50		24.64	26.04	23.49
Over 17 euros	9.50		5.07	8.33	13.86

**Table III.**  
Inter-group differences in consumer habits

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utilitarian” group, while those who went with their families were mainly from the “mainly hedonic” and “ethical values” groups. Members of the “mainly utilitarian” group hardly went to fast-food restaurants with their families at all.

We observed no meaningful differences in average per capita expenditure. The largest share of the sample (44.5 per cent) spent between 6 and 11 euros per person. The members of the “mainly utilitarian” group were the most price-sensitive and patronised restaurants less frequently in order to spend less.

With regard to satisfaction, customers were generally satisfied with the food at the restaurant and with the establishment itself (a score of more than 3 on a scale from 1 to 5). The most satisfied clients were those from the “mainly hedonic” group (score of approximately 4), while the least satisfied were those from the “ethical values” group (see Table IV).

An examination of the previous table illuminates several interesting findings. First, all customer groups presented higher scores on those variables related to satisfaction with the food, satisfaction with the establishment, and trust, but lower scores for loyalty. In other words, customers had the most appreciation for variables related to the short and medium term.

With regard to the short term, people presented higher satisfaction scores for the food compared to the establishment itself. For the medium term, it seems important that the scores on the trust variables paralleled those on the satisfaction variables. With regard to the long term, there were three loyalty variables that received scores lower to 3. From highest to lowest score: “meals outside the home are consumed at this establishment”, “best option for food away from home” and “likelihood to recommend the establishment”. Notably, although the loyalty variable “regular visits to the establishment” had a higher score than its peers, it might reflect a mere routine behaviour more than actual loyalty.

Additionally, we observed that the mainly hedonic group had the overall highest scores, while the ethical values group had the overall lowest scores. As for trust, the data were generally similar to those on satisfaction (with scores of over 3 points). Therefore, it seems that the “mainly hedonic” customer group tends to present higher scores in satisfaction, trust and loyalty. In contrast, the customer group that primarily values aspects related to health, the environment, and social responsibility presented lower scores in all these variables. This latter finding might suggest that fast-food restaurants have not successfully linked their image to ethical values.

Inter-group differences were mainly found among customers from the “mainly hedonic” group, who maintained a very strong trust in the restaurant (score of around 4). We performed an ANOVA and a Mann–Whitney U test on the “mainly utilitarian” and “ethical values” groups to establish whether the two clusters differed. Both tests revealed statistically significant differences for only three variables: the establishment’s honesty, the qualifications of its employees and its technical resources. The “ethical values” group consistently gave higher scores to the first two variables.

#### 4. Conclusions

The present study aimed to understand how consumers’ food values relate to their behaviours at fast-food restaurants. To this end, we joined the food values scale proposed by Lusk and Briggeman (2009) with the FRL model proposed by Grunert *et al.* (1993) in a survey of fast-food customers in Spain. Overall, the results corroborated the importance of designing segmented strategies in order to garner diverse consumers.

First, we identified three distinct groups of consumers: the “mainly utilitarian” group (32.45 per cent of the sample), which comprises those consumers who place top importance on the price paid for food, but also assign considerable value to appearance and taste; the “mainly hedonic” group (24 per cent of the sample), who place high value on all aspects except for price, and especially on the values of appearance, taste and convenience

Variable	Mean	ANOVA /H- Kruskal–Wallis	Average values for groups			Consumers' behaviour in fast-food restaurants
			Mainly utilitarian	Mainly hedonic	Ethical values	
<i>Satisfaction with the food</i>						
The food met my expectations	3.78	$p < 0.001$	3.94	4.07	3.48	<hr/>
The food was satisfactory	3.76	$p < 0.001$	3.75	4.22	3.50	
Satisfaction with the food prepared in this establishment	3.69	$p < 0.001$	3.84	4.15	3.31	
<i>Satisfaction with the establishment</i>						
Good choice of establishment	3.57	$p < 0.001$	3.69	3.89	3.28	
Total satisfaction with this establishment	3.74	$p < 0.001$	3.75	4.23	3.44	
Total satisfaction compared to other restaurants	3.39	$p < 0.001$	3.37	3.93	3.10	
<i>Trust</i>						
The establishment keeps its promises	3.54	$p < 0.001$	3.36	4.10	3.35	
Truthfulness of the information provided by the establishment	3.53	$p < 0.001$	3.38	4.09	3.33	
Honesty of the establishment	3.51	$p < 0.001$	3.18	4.13	3.43	
Trust in the establishment's intentions	3.52	$p < 0.001$	3.27	4.07	3.42	
Sincere and honest information	3.46	$p < 0.001$	3.21	4.15	3.27	
Professionalism of the establishment	3.61	$p < 0.001$	3.46	4.11	3.45	
Technical resources of the establishment	3.57	$p < 0.001$	3.57	3.96	3.33	
Qualifications of the workers	3.46	$p < 0.001$	3.12	3.91	3.48	
Concern for client satisfaction	3.68	$p < 0.001$	3.49	4.17	3.56	
Proper treatment received	3.76	$p < 0.001$	3.64	4.15	3.63	
Ease of obtaining information from the establishment	3.54	$p < 0.001$	3.27	4.13	3.42	
<i>Loyalty</i>						
Meals outside the home are consumed at this establishment	2.71	$p < 0.001$	2.70	3.13	2.48	
Likelihood to recommend the establishment	2.83	$p < 0.001$	2.91	3.36	2.45	
Best option for food away from home	2.78	$p < 0.001$	2.75	3.30	2.51	
Regular visits to this establishment	3.64	$p < 0.001$	3.71	3.95	3.40	
Regular business with the establishment	3.54	$p < 0.001$	3.45	3.96	3.36	
<b>Note:</b> Scale of 1 to 5						

**Table IV.**  
Inter-group differences  
in satisfaction,  
trust and loyalty

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(relative to other clusters); and finally, the “ethical values” group (41.5 per cent of the sample), who most identify with a range of values related to safety, the environment and social responsibility. In addition, and in line with reviews of the relevant literature, all consumer groups seemed to appreciate fast-food restaurants’ efforts to combine hedonic and utilitarian benefits, albeit to varying extents.

Second, even though most of the respondents were heavy fast-food restaurants users, there were some interesting differences between them: those clients least sensitive to price (the “ethical values” group) were also the most likely to eat at fast-food restaurants. The more that fast-food restaurants position themselves as having healthy options, the more they might attract consumers from this group. Moreover, we found that the majority of consumers went to the restaurants with their friends, family or partners (82.5 per cent in all). Consumers who ate with friends were mainly from the mainly utilitarian group, whilst those who went with their families were mainly from the mainly hedonic and ethical values groups. Members of the “mainly utilitarian” group hardly went to fast-food restaurants with their families at all. No significant differences were observed in average per capita expenditure, being the largest share of the sample spent between 6 and 11 euros per person.

Third, we observed that all customer groups expressed higher scores for variables related to satisfaction with the food, satisfaction with the establishment and trust, but lower scores for loyalty. It seems that customers had the most appreciation for the variables related to the short term (satisfaction) and medium term (trust). Thus, restaurant managers may struggle with achieving the long-term outcome (loyalty to the store), as consumers do not seem to appreciate fast-food restaurants in that way. Moreover, the high scores among the mainly hedonic group, coupled with the low scores of the ethical values group, may reflect such restaurants’ reputation as being contrary to ethical values.

Several interesting recommendations can be drawn from these findings. For instance, all consumer groups appeared to value the restaurants’ efforts to provide them with a combination of hedonic and utilitarian benefits. Thus, these restaurants should continue to enhance or improve the presence of values related to such benefits. In doing so, these values may translate from the establishment’s image to the corporate image. In addition, managers should analyse why consumers do not exhibit a real loyalty to the establishment in the long term, despite their routine behaviour of repeatedly visiting the store. It is important to understand the real limits on attracting loyal customers, who are pivotal to the establishment’s long-term survival.

One way to boost customer loyalty might be to address the market gap between fast-food restaurants and “ethical values” customers. Such consumers might discover a greater interest in visiting fast-food restaurants if they exhibit more concern for the environment and social responsibility. In this sense, advertising campaigns focussed solely on the health quality of food might be sub-optimal for attracting this customer segment. However, attracting these customers will require not only better communication, but also incremental innovation through the development of, for example, healthier meals and greater environmental activism.

It is worth adding that the “mainly hedonic” customers placed substantial importance (relative to the other two groups) on the issue of trust, particularly as it concerns the delivery of the service. From a business perspective, this suggests that restaurants should undertake specific actions to increase trust. These actions might include providing more information on calories and nutritional values, as that is where the greatest informational asymmetries have been identified.

Finally, we found that customer satisfaction does not meaningfully contribute to customer loyalty, at least in this context. Indeed, consumers concerned about health, the environment and social responsibility were the least loyal, and yet 58.43 per cent of them frequent these types of fast-food restaurants several times a week or more. This finding

aligns with Carpenter (2008), who established that consumer behaviour may be repeated more 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, 1997). 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.

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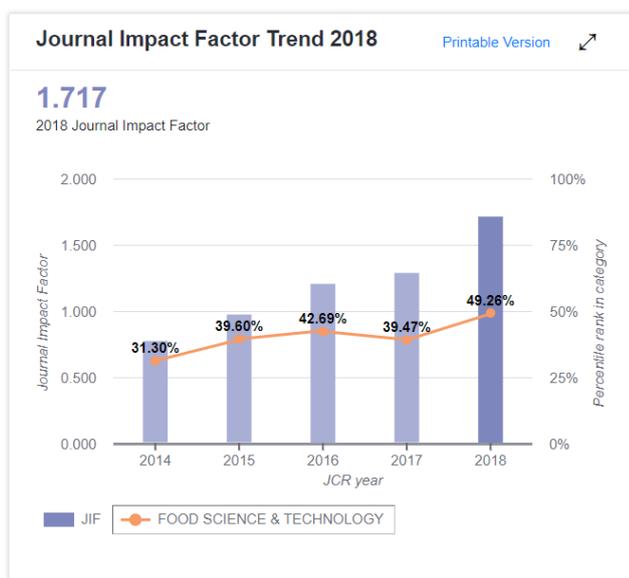
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**The Influence of Food Values on Post-Purchase Variables at Food Establishments**

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## The Influence of Food Values on Post-Purchase Variables at Food Establishments

### Structured abstract

#### **Purpose (mandatory)**

The importance of food values for the post-purchase process has not been widely studied. Most previous research in this line has focused on examining either the attributes of specific food categories, without taking the corresponding values into account, or food-purchasing attitudes and behaviour. To address this gap in the research, this paper delves deeper into the influence of food values on post-purchase variables.

#### **Design/methodology/approach (mandatory)**

Specifically, it analyses the influence of food values on satisfaction with the purchases made at an establishment, loyalty (behavioural and attitudinal), and switching costs. To this end, a sample of 708 consumers, collected through online questionnaires in Spain, is analysed using various descriptive statistics and causal models.

#### **Findings (mandatory)**

The findings confirm the influence of food values on satisfaction and that satisfaction positively influences loyalty. Switching costs were not found to moderate the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.

#### **Research limitations/implications (if applicable)**

The survey had to be completed online, and, thus, respondents needed to have an e-mail address. This influenced the respondents' profile, since many consumers over the age of 54 do not have e-mail, do not use it, or are more reluctant to complete online surveys.

#### **Practical implications (if applicable)**

Purchase satisfaction was not found to affect switching costs, which reinforces the idea that loyalty can sometimes be spurious. It would thus be an indicator that, as long as consumers have no other option, they will continue to shop at the establishment. In contrast, establishment satisfaction did generate switching costs. This finding could be due to aspects such as convenience, the development and maintenance of relationships with the employees, knowledge of where products are located in the store, etc.

Customers may be dissatisfied with their purchase, yet still satisfied with an establishment, which could entail very high switching costs for them and, therefore, cause them to remain loyal (albeit spuriously) to the establishment.

#### **Social implications (if applicable)**

#### **Originality/value (mandatory)**

This research contributes to the literature in this field by examining the influence of food values on key postpurchase variables.

**KEYWORDS:** Food values, consumer behaviour, satisfaction, loyalty, switching costs.

## The Influence of Food Values on Post-Purchase Variables at Food Establishments

### INTRODUCTION

There is considerable interest in understanding consumer behaviour based on the motivations, preferences, and habits that trigger the purchase of food products (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014). Food choice is a complex issue, amongst other things, because people can make around 200 decisions a day related to food and beverage consumption (Wansink and Sobal, 2007). Thus, the purchase of food for consumption is no longer considered a purely routine process and has come to be regarded as a process with a high degree of consumer engagement, especially in certain situations and for certain products. The food-product purchasing process can be described as a complex process influenced by individual (personality), environmental (Furst *et al.*, 1996), and sociodemographic aspects, as well as individual motivations and values (Chen, 2007; Wadolowska *et al.*, 2008), amongst other things. Aspects related to context and social interaction might also be cited, as well as certain sensory attributes of foods and the information stated on the product (King *et al.*, 2004).

The whole process is influenced by the changes in consumer buying and consumption habits of recent years. Over the last few decades, a debate has arisen over how aspects such as health or ethics influence eating in terms of food production and distribution (Clarke *et al.*, 2008). Despite increased social awareness of the importance of a healthy, balanced diet, more and more people suffer from obesity, are less physically fit, and have a more sedentary lifestyle. Likewise, consumer groups have emerged that are more concerned with the genetic modification processes that have become increasingly common in commercialised food (Luomala *et al.*, 2006). For all of these reasons, determining how consumers assess the characteristics of the food products on offer at different food establishments is of great interest.

With a view to addressing these consumer concerns, in the field of retail, retailers are devoting more and more space to dietary and health products, amongst other things. There is also increased interest in identifying which aspects of the purchased food and of the retailers that sell it shoppers value most, as well as which ones have the greatest influence on key variables such as satisfaction, loyalty, or switching costs (Martínez-Ruiz *et al.*, 2010).

In this broad and heterogeneous frame of reference, it is helpful to take a more detailed look at the relatively new concept of food values and, especially, at how consumers take them into account in their food-purchasing and consumption processes (c.f., Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; Lusk, 2011; Martínez-Ruiz and Gómez-Cantó, 2016). The present paper aims to examine the importance of food values in the food-purchasing and consumption process, as well as their impact on satisfaction, loyalty, and switching costs with regard to the retail establishment where the food is bought. To achieve this goal, the remainder of this paper will be structured as follows. First, it will offer a review of the relevant literature on this line of research to enable the formulation of research hypotheses. Next, it will analyse the results of the empirical part of the research, which was conducted using a database built with an online questionnaire completed by consumers in Spain. Finally, it will discuss the conclusions and implications for management, as well as the limitations and future lines of research.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Food values

Several studies have shown that personal values can predict the consumption of products such as food (e.g. Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Povey *et al.*, 2000), influencing consumers' choices (e.g. Allen and Baines, 2002; Feather *et al.*, 1998). Building on that work, others studies, including key subsequent contributions such as Lusk and Briggeman (2009) or Lusk (2011), have sought to identify why consumers prefer some food products over others, taking into account the most important food values for the end consumer.

Specifically, Lusk and Briggeman (2009) conduct an extensive review of the relevant literature on end consumers' willingness to pay for food products and for the values they represent, applying to food the general concept of values previously defined by authors such as Rokeach (1973) or Schwartz (1992). They argue that consumers have intermediate values consisting of a stable set of beliefs about the relative importance of certain meta-attributes resulting from end states (desired goals and states), associated with the purchase and consumption of food. The existence of these values could play a key role in explaining consumers' choices according to the aforementioned means-end chain theory, which postulates that fundamental underlying values motivate consumers' purchase decisions.

The literature review shows that many studies have sought to identify consumers' preferences for product-specific attributes, without considering the fact that, when making their purchase decision, consumers are choosing from a wide range of products with a large variety of characteristic attributes or features (Lister *et al.*, 2014). This is why Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011) study the general classifications attributable to food in the form of values, since they express more abstract attributes, capable of explaining consumers' purchases over time. Some of these food values, such as safety, origin, or naturalness, have frequently been considered in many subsequent studies conducted in the field of consumer preferences (e.g. Adalja *et al.*, 2015).

### The influence of food values on key post-purchase variables

Satisfaction is one of the main key variables in the construction of company-consumer relationships (Oliver, 1997). In general, consumer satisfaction can be defined as a global evaluation or a state of feelings toward a product, service, or establishment (Olsen *et al.*, 2005). For Giese and Cote (2000), consumer satisfaction is a response (cognitive or affective) of varying intensity, with a time-specific point of determination and limited duration, directed toward focal aspects of product acquisition and/or consumption. In light of this definition, a customer's satisfaction with his or her purchase can be the result of the value provided by that experience and thus could include both hedonic and utilitarian benefits, bearing in mind that every consumer behaves differently and assigns different value to his or her purchase experience.

In this regard, Vad Andersen and Hyldig (2015) observe that the sensory properties of food (e.g. appearance, taste, texture) are one determinant of satisfaction. Accordingly, they have been used in numerous studies on food and consumer behaviour (Tuorila, 2007). Another widely researched aspect is the origin or provenance of food and its influence on satisfaction. For example, Stefani *et al.* (2006) highlight the importance of knowing the origin of food and its influence on hedonic benefits in the eating experience. Origin is thought to affect the consumer's assessment in two ways: either because it can be considered an indication of quality insofar as it suggests certain

connotations (e.g. sensory characteristics, symbolic function) or due to ethical values, authenticity, or its ability to evoke memories of past experiences (satisfactory or otherwise). Additionally, Vad Andersen and Hyldig (2015) conclude that multiple factors are likely to contribute to food satisfaction (the hedonic and/or sensory ones being the most highly valued) and that the importance of each factor is different for each person. Vad Andersen *et al.* (2017) corroborate that the hedonic sensory experience is the most important factor for food satisfaction and that post-consumption sensations can also contribute to it.

Finally, some studies have focused on assessing consumer satisfaction with food purchases based on the retail format (Carpenter and Moore, 2006; Kamran-Disfani *et al.*, 2017).

Food retailers should thus understand these differences in order to create retail formats and offer products with values that allow them to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This is especially true given that, as a result of the highly heterogeneous nature of consumers' expectations, satisfaction can vary depending on both the values offered by the food purchases and the type of establishment (Huddleston *et al.*, 2009). Based on these ideas, the following research hypotheses can be proposed regarding the expected influence of food values on both purchase satisfaction and satisfaction with the establishment:

H1. Food values have a positive influence on satisfaction.

As this satisfaction can refer both to the purchase and to the retail establishment where it is made, this hypothesis can be further divided into the following two sub-hypotheses:

H1a. Food values have a positive and significant influence on purchase satisfaction.

H1b. Food values have a positive and significant influence on establishment satisfaction.

Loyalty is also undoubtedly a key variable in consumers' post-purchase processes. In general, customer loyalty is understood as the buyer's overall attachment, or deep commitment, to a product, service, brand, or organisation (Oliver, 1999). The concept of loyalty has a similar meaning to that of relational commitment, which is usually described in the relationship marketing literature as an enduring desire to stay in a valuable relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The relevant literature shows that whilst the study of loyalty has been approached from many perspectives, the most common are the behavioural and attitudinal perspectives (Dick and Basu, 1994). The former conceptualises loyalty as repeat purchasing behaviour. According to this perspective, people may repeat purchases out of habit due to the existence of barriers to switching providers or a lack of attractive alternatives. Thus, customers may stay in the relationship out of obligation, developing a sort of spurious loyalty, i.e. without ever developing feelings toward the provider or supplier (Picón *et al.*, 2014). The latter perspective, the attitudinal approach, describes loyalty as a psychological state (affective and/or cognitive), which the customer can achieve as a result of the company's relational strategy. Under this approach, the customer may maintain the relationship based on the benefits received whilst it lasts. This approach is based on the idea that true loyalty is a positive attitude toward the company. Therefore, a positive attitude toward the provider or supplier is what ensures repeat purchases in

the future. From this perspective, unlike in the previous type of relationship, customers are loyal because they truly wish to maintain the relationship (Oliver, 1999). The present paper refers to these two perspectives.

Although customer satisfaction has long been commonly considered a clear antecedent of loyalty, some authors (e.g. Mital and Lassar, 1998) have shown that a satisfied customer is not always a loyal one. These authors base their argument on two possible reasons: (1) a dissatisfied customer may continue to buy the same brand or go to the same store if she cannot find anything better amongst the available alternatives; and (2) a satisfied customer may be willing to purchase new brands or go to a new provider in the hopes of achieving more favourable results. In light of these ideas, the following hypothesis regarding the positive influence that satisfaction is expected to have on loyalty can be formulated:

H2. Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

However, since satisfaction can refer to both the purchase and the retail establishment where the purchase is made, the foregoing hypothesis can be divided into the following two sub-hypotheses:

H2a. Purchase satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

H2b Establishment satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

Finally, the present research also seeks to measure the influence that satisfaction, with both the purchase and the establishment, is likely to have on switching-cost variables. In the field of marketing, switching barriers generally refer to the difficulties that dissatisfied customers must overcome to switch to another provider or supplier; they may also include the financial, social and psychological burden borne by the customer when he or she switches to another establishment (Fornell, 1992). Therefore, the higher the switching barrier, the more a customer will feel he or she has no choice but to remain loyal to a retail establishment. Switching costs can be defined as the cost incurred when switching from one retail establishment to another, including time, money, and psychological costs (Dick and Basu, 1994). This definition could also include the perceived risk, insofar as there are also potential losses when switching establishments, including financial, social, psychological, and safety-related losses (Murray, 1991).

With regard to the role of switching costs in the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, some studies consider switching costs to be an antecedent of loyalty (e.g. Aydin *et al.*, 2005). In fact, Kotler (1997) indicates that switching costs play a key role in the process of building customer loyalty, noting that there are two main ways to retain customers: increasing the satisfaction level and increasing the switching costs. Likewise, some authors (e.g. Dagger and David, 2012) suggest that switching costs have a moderating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, arguing that the impact of satisfaction on loyalty is much greater when switching costs are lower (Bell *et al.*, 2005). This argument assumes that customer's decision to remain loyal to a supplier depends on how he or she evaluates the switching costs. Switching to another retail establishment or brand would entail both a cognitive and a behavioural effort.

Satisfied customers are generally understood to have less motivation to seek and evaluate other alternatives (Liu, 2006). This is consistent with the work of authors such as Pick and Eisend (2014), who argue that the perceived quality of a relationship and a company's offer are positively related to switching costs. Additionally, Oliver (1999) suggests that satisfaction is a necessary step in the loyalty-building process, but that it

becomes less significant when other mechanisms (e.g. social or personal ties) are influencing that loyalty. All these factors create switching costs that increase customer retention. Matzler *et al.* (2015) find also a positive relationship between satisfaction and switching costs, establishing that switching costs have a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship. Furthermore, customer satisfaction enables greater identification with the brand and the supplier, which increases the switching costs (Matzler *et al.*, 2015).

This mediating effect is also analysed by De Matos *et al.* (2009), who conclude that different types of relationships (direct, partially mediated, totally mediated, and moderated) can be established between satisfaction, switching costs, and loyalty and that switching costs can thus act differently depending on the context within the satisfaction-loyalty relationship (i.e. depending on whether they have, for example, a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship). Additionally, Picón *et al.* (2014) corroborate that switching costs play a mediating role within this relationship and thus argue that satisfaction influences the expected perception of the costs and benefits of switching and that this perception, in turn, influences loyalty. This reasoning is grounded in the idea of opportunity costs: the higher the satisfaction, the greater the opportunity costs, or loss of satisfaction, when the customer switches (Picón *et al.*, 2014).

Based on these ideas, the following research hypotheses can be proposed regarding the potential influence that purchase satisfaction and satisfaction with an establishment are likely to have on switching costs:

- H3. Purchase satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on switching costs.
- H4. Establishment satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on switching costs.
- H5. Switching costs have a positive and significant influence on loyalty.

Figure 1 graphically synthesises the proposed relationships between the considered variables.

Figure 1

## METHODOLOGY

To test the model proposed in Figure 1, a questionnaire was designed containing questions aimed at obtaining information about the retail establishment where the respondents had made their purchase, their socio-demographic profile, and the study variables (food values, satisfaction, loyalty, switching costs). The scales used for the food-value variables were adapted from Lusk and Briggeman (2009) and Lusk (2011). Specifically, the questions related to these variables focused on how important respondents considered these values to be on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was the least important and 5 the most. In contrast, to assess satisfaction, switching costs, and loyalty, 5-point Likert scales were used. These items were adapted from Kamran-Disfani *et al.* (2017).

Over the month of April 2017, 708 online questionnaires were collected in the city of Albacete. The questionnaires were distributed amongst shoppers over the age of 18 who lived in the city and had previously made their purchase at a consumer-goods establishment in the city.

### Descriptive analysis

A total of 708 valid questionnaires were collected, with regard to which 63.4% of the respondents were women and 36.6% men. A total of 69.5% of the respondents had a monthly income of up to 1,200 euros, followed by 19.8% with a monthly income of up to 1,800 euros. Some 76.7% of the respondents were single or had a partner but no children, whilst 23.3% had children. A total of 52.1% were aged 23 or under, and 29.1% aged 33 or under. With regard to educational attainment, 44.2% had completed basic education, followed by 36.4% with university studies.

As for the retail establishment where the respondents had made their purchase, 68.78% had shopped at a supermarket, whilst 16.80% had shopped at a discount store (i.e. 85.59% of the sample was concentrated in these two types of retail formats).

The items used to test the model had scores above the mean. With regard to the different groups of variables, the scores for the food-value scale were above the mean and even, for many items, above 3.5. Specifically, the food-value scales with the highest mean scores were, in order, 'taste' and 'extent to which food does not cause illnesses'. In contrast, the scales with the lowest mean scores were for the values referring to the 'extent to which all parties involved in the trade equally benefit' and to 'where the agricultural commodities used to make the food were grown'. With regard to the purchase satisfaction variables, the highest mean score was found for the variable 'purchases made at this establishment meet my expectations', whilst the lowest mean score was found for the variable 'I consider the choice of this establishment to make my purchase a good one'. As for establishment satisfaction, the highest mean score was found for the variable 'satisfaction level with the retail establishment' and the lowest for 'compared to other establishments, my satisfaction level is'. As concerns loyalty, the highest mean score was found for the variable, 'I plan to continue shopping at this establishment', and the lowest for 'Whenever possible, I recommend this establishment'. Finally, regarding switching costs, the highest average score was found for the variable 'knowledge of product location' and the lowest for 'special relationship with the employees'. See Table 1.

Table 1

PLS SEM was used to validate the model proposed in Figure 1. The model was estimated using SmartPLS 3.0 software. To establish the significance of the parameters, bootstrapping was performed with 10000 resamples.

To ensure construct reliability and validity, first, the indicator loadings were examined for the reflective constructs. Those items with a loading of less than 0.7 were omitted (Hair *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, the item 'special relationship' was omitted from the switching costs construct, as it had a score of less than 0.55. The 'food values' variable was considered a formative construct. The assessment of this type of construct is based on: (1) convergent validity; (2) collinearity; and (3) the weight of each indicator (Hair *et al.*, 2017). For the measurement of the formative constructs, convergent validity was assessed through the construct's correlation with an alternative measure of the same concept (Hair *et al.*, 2017). With regard to the weights of each indicator, some items had a low score. Unlike reflective indicators, formative indicators are not interchangeable; therefore, omitting a single indicator can reduce the validity of the measurement model's content (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001).

The next step was to evaluate construct reliability and validity. The most commonly used criterion is that proposed by Jöreskog (1971), which establishes that values over the 0.7 to 0.9 range are considered good or very good. Other indicators are Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). To determine discriminant validity, the sole criterion offered by PLS was used, which verifies whether the AVE of each factor is greater than the square of the correlation between each pair of factors (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Before the structural model can be validated, it is necessary to test for collinearity. This process must be performed for both formative and reflective constructs. As all the indicators have values lower than 3, it can be concluded that there is no collinearity (Hair *et al.*, 2018; Becker *et al.*, 2013). To evaluate the structural model's predictive power, the criterion proposed by Falk and Miller (1992) was used, namely, the  $R^2$  of each dependent construct must be greater than 0.1.

In particular, the  $R^2$  for each construct is: .490 for Loyalty ( $Q^2=.295$ ), .203 for Purchase Satisfaction ( $Q^2=.134$ ), .141 for Establishment Satisfaction ( $Q^2=.064$ ) and .044 for Switching Costs ( $Q^2=.0024$ ).

The 'switching costs' construct has a value of less than .10. However, this result should be interpreted with caution, since its value depends on the number of the construct's predictors (Hair *et al.*, 2018).

### Estimation results

Finally, once all the measurement instrument's psychometric properties had been evaluated, the model proposed in Figure 1 was estimated. The model estimation results are shown in Table 2.

Once the hypotheses had been directly tested in the model, the mediating effect of some of the study variables was analysed. Mediation refers to the presence of an intermediate variable or mechanism that transfers the effect of an antecedent variable on an outcome (Aguinis *et al.*, 2016). This gives rise to the formulation of a mediation hypothesis postulating how, or by what means, an independent variable affects a dependent variable through one or more mediating variables (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018).

Table 2

Most PLS-SEM studies do not consider mediating effects in their hypotheses and, therefore, do not analyse their importance in structural models (Hair *et al.*, 2016). However, there is a substantial body of literature on methods for testing mediating effects (Hayes and Scharkow, 2013). For example, in the present research, there is a type of mediation, namely, simple mediation, that occurs when there is only one mediating variable, i.e. mediation exists when the relationship between the independent and dependent variable changes as a result of the introduction of a mediating variable. This causal effect of an independent variable on the dependent one can be divided into two types of effects (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018):

- Indirect effect (AxB) through a mediator variable (M).
- Direct effect (path C')
- Total effect (direct effect + indirect effect) =  $C = C' + (AxB)$

In the present research, to calculate the mediating effects, bootstrapping was performed. To test the indirect effects in PLS, several steps were followed (adapted from Chin, 2010). Specifically, the steps developed in Zhao *et al.* (2010) and Nitzl *et al.* (2016)

were followed. First, the importance of the effect was determined by evaluating the significance of the indirect effects (AxB). To test that significance, bootstrapping was performed with 10,000 resamples. The direct effect values obtained were then multiplied.

Second, the type and magnitude of the indirect effect were determined. To this end, the variance accounted for (VAF) was calculated, which is the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect (direct effect + indirect effect) (Hair *et al.*, 2016). In other words, VAF determines the extent to which the mediation process explains the variance in the dependent variable (Cepeda *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, it does so as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{VAF} &= (\text{Indirect effect}) / (\text{Total effect}) \\ \text{VAF} &= (\text{Indirect effect}) / (\text{Direct effect} + \text{Indirect effect}) \\ \text{VAF} > 80\% &\rightarrow \text{Full mediation} \\ 20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\% &\rightarrow \text{Partial mediation} \\ \text{VAF} \leq 20\% &\rightarrow \text{No mediation} \end{aligned}$$

In the present case, switching costs were not found to have any mediating effect on the purchase satisfaction-loyalty relationship, as can be seen in the following formula:

$$(0.065 * 0.345) / ((0.151 + (0.065 * 0.345))) = 12.93\% > \text{No mediating effect}$$

Nor were switching costs found to have any mediating effect on the establishment satisfaction-loyalty relationship:

$$(0.155 * 0.345) / ((0.418 + (0.155 * 0.345))) = 11.34\% > \text{No mediating effect}$$

Thus, the results obtained corroborate the model proposed in Figure 1. Support was found for all the hypotheses except H3 (referring to the purchase satisfaction-switching costs relationship).

Specifically, the data show that the strongest influence is that exerted by food values on purchase satisfaction, followed, in descending order, by the influence of: establishment satisfaction on loyalty; food values on establishment satisfaction; switching costs on loyalty; establishment satisfaction on switching costs; and establishment satisfaction on loyalty. Finally, switching costs were not found to have any mediating effect on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.

These results are consistent with the literature in this line of research, as they highlight the importance of offering a product or providing a service that satisfies the customer. This helps generate loyalty, with regard to both products and the services offered at the retail establishment. However, although these conditions are necessary, they are not enough to create true loyalty. Support was not found for the relationship proposed in hypothesis H3 (purchase satisfaction-switching costs), which could lead customers to buy the same product in another establishment. Retailers should pay careful attention to this aspect, making sure to offer products that build customer loyalty through superior quality or exclusive distribution.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The present research has furthered understanding of the importance of food values in the post-purchase process, allowing a more in-depth exploration of consumer behaviour in the field of food and consumer goods retail. From a conceptual perspective, having

considered Lusk (2011) and Lusk and Briggeman (2009) is a major advance, as those papers marked a turning point in the line of research of this paper. Amongst other things, the work of those authors opened the doors to the study of food values, as opposed to attributes, thereby enabling a more detailed analysis from a consumer perspective. It must be recalled that food values are the union of a consumer's values as a human being with what that consumer believes that any food he or she purchases or consumes should have.

The results also show that food values greatly influence customer satisfaction, with regard to both the purchase and the retail establishment. That is a necessary first step for consumers to consider an establishment as a potential purchasing option. Interestingly, in this research, consumers placed greater importance on purchase satisfaction than establishment satisfaction. This underscores the strategy that retailers are pursuing to build customer loyalty, first, by meeting customers' needs and, second, by trying to ensure that their shelves and sales outlets are stocked with foods that take food values into account (functional foods, superfoods, dietary foods, preservative-free foods, low-calorie foods, etc.). In other words, more and more consumers are increasingly aware of the various values that food can represent and are trying to address aspects related to values such as health and wellness.

The results of the assessment of the post-purchase process are also worth highlighting. When evaluating the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, consumers placed more importance on the establishment where they made the purchase than on the products they bought there. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that a satisfied customer is not always a loyal one.

In contrast, switching costs were not found to have a mediating effect on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, that is, only direct effects were detected. Likewise, purchase satisfaction was not found to affect switching costs, which reinforces the idea that loyalty can sometimes be spurious. It would thus be an indicator that, as long as consumers have no other option, they will continue to shop at the establishment. In contrast, establishment satisfaction did generate switching costs. This finding could be due to aspects such as convenience, the development and maintenance of relationships with the employees, knowledge of where products are located in the store, etc.

Finally, attention should be called to the importance of the relationship between switching costs and loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural), i.e. customers may be dissatisfied with their purchase, yet still satisfied with an establishment, which could entail very high switching costs for them and, therefore, cause them to remain loyal (albeit spurious) to the establishment. Even the descriptive analysis showed that this was the variable to receive the lowest score, which could suggest that the consumer was shopping at the establishment for convenience. It should be recalled that around 60% of the respondents were shopping at a supermarket and that the structure of this retail format is quite close to their homes, meaning the consumers might shop at multiple establishments.

These results could be due to the sample profile, since a high percentage of the respondents were consumers under the age of 35. The failure to obtain a sample with a broader age range could be due, amongst other things, to the fact that the survey had to be completed online, and, thus, respondents needed to have an e-mail address. Many consumers over the age of 54 do not have e-mail, do not use it, or are more reluctant to complete online surveys.

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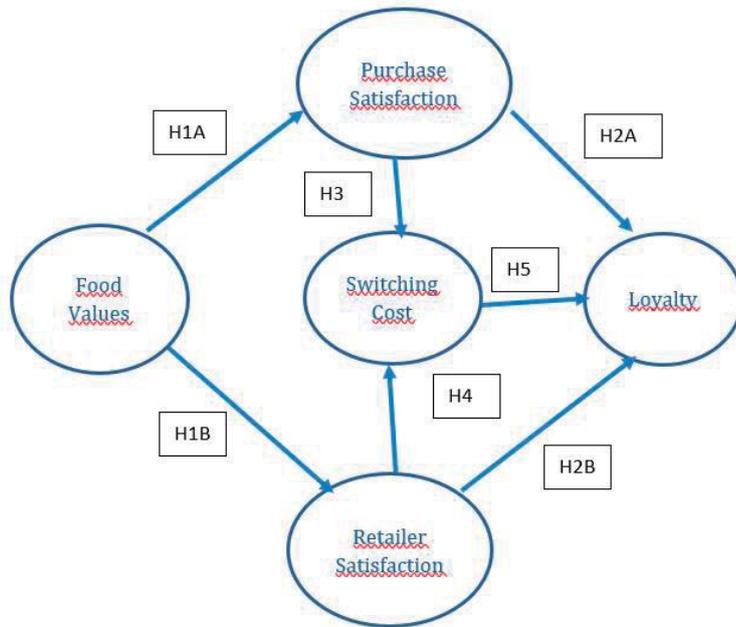
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Figures

Figure 1. Proposed Model



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## Tables

**Table 1. Univariate analysis**

	ITEM	Mean	Standard deviation	
FOOD VALUES	Food produced without modern technologies	3.5791	1.07074	
	Taste of food	4.3771	0.81213	
	Price of food	3.8602	0.96557	
	Food does not cause illnesses	4.2331	1.04262	
	Ease with which food is cooked or consumed	3.6031	0.96434	
	Nutritional value of food	3.7246	0.98883	
	Preservation of traditional consumption patterns	3.2472	1.08854	
	Where the agricultural commodities used to make the food were grown	3.0438	1.16748	
	Extent to which all parties involved in the trade equally benefit	2.8771	1.16059	
	Extent to which the food seems appealing	3.8545	0.93495	
	Effect of food production on the environment	3.2246	1.10117	
	Purchases made at this establishment meet my expectations	4.09	0.621	
	PUR			

CHASE S	My experience with the purchases made at this establishment is satisfactory	4.03	0.647
	I consider the choice of this establishment to make my purchase a good one	3.95	0.764
ESTABLISHMENT SATISFACTION	Satisfaction level with my purchases	3.98	0.768
	Satisfaction level with the retail establishment	4.01	0.804
	Compared to other establishments, my satisfaction level is	3.96	0.7
	Disruption involved in switching to another establishment	2.83	1.211
SWITCHING COSTS	Time needed to make the purchase at another establishment	2.93	1.202
	Knowledge of product location	4	0.944
	Special relationship with employees	2.23	1.227
	I do most of my shopping at this establishment	3.77	0.999
LOYALTY	Whenever possible, I recommend this establishment	3.11	1.155
	I always think of this establishment as the best option	3.58	1.037
	I plan to continue shopping at this establishment	3.95	0.874
	I expect my relationship with the establishment to last over time	3.58	1.04

Table 2. Path coefficients

	$\beta$	t-statistic	p value
<b>(H1a) Food values-----Purchase satisfaction</b>	.451	12.205	0.000
<b>(H1b) Food values-----Establishment satisfaction</b>	.375	9.976	0.000
<b>(H2a) Purchase satisfaction-----Loyalty</b>	.151	3.569	0.000
<b>(H2b) Establishment Satisfaction-----Loyalty</b>	.418	10.090	0.000
<b>(H3) Purchase satisfaction-----Switching costs</b>	.065	<b>1.115</b>	<b>0.265</b>
<b>(H4) Establishment satisfaction-----Switching costs</b>	.155	2.756	0.000
<b>(H5) Switching costs-----Loyalty</b>	.345	11.999	0.000

