ISSN 2348-3156 (Print)
International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research ISSN 2348-3164 (online)
Vol. 6, Issue 3, pp: (317-327), Month: July - September 2018, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

FOOD CONSUMERS BUYER BEHAVIOUR: AN APPROACH THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF PREVIOUS TESTED MODELS

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Abstract: **People's needs and motivations are complex and they are likely to seek satisfaction at an economic level and also at deeper levels, involving emotions, cultural norms and values, group affiliations, etc. (Chisnall 1995). choice and consumption of a product are based on a cognitive decision-making process and take account of stimuli surrounding that choice and consumption. Past experience, sensory perception, and emotion affect are important influences but, at some point of the experience with the product, an evaluation based on some criteria (objective or not) is made by the consumers of that product. The structure of the study is based on a review of the most widely used models in the marketing field to explain and predict consumer behaviour. Special emphasis is given to the application of those models to food. One important conclusion of the study is that product quality is a summary construct, which subsumes many other aspects of the product. This conclusion is in accordance with the 'multi-attribute' approach to food quality, where quality is regarded as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and overall quality is described by a set of attributes as perceived by consumers. The buyer then forms an overall, one-dimensional quality evaluation by some weighing of the various attributes, which will determine its choice (Grunert, 1997). In summary, from the models described in this section perceived quality can by conceptualized as a global assessment of the product based on extrinsic or intrinsic cues.**

Keywords: **Consumer, food preferences, food choices, Food Quality and perception.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Food comes in infinite variety and food choices are a major component of all purchase decisions made by consumers (Grunert, 1997). However, in spite of the research that has been conducted during the last twenty years, there is no singular commonly accepted model for explaining consumer behaviour and food evaluation. The aim of this chapter is to review and analysis of consumer buyer behaviour concerning the evaluation and choice of food, through the integration of previous tested models

The structure of the study is as follows. In the next section a review of the most widely used models in the marketing field to explain and predict consumer behaviour is presented. Special emphasis will be given to the application of those models to food. A great bulk of research on consumer behaviour towards food is concerned with alternative evaluation and choice and the role of food quality in that process.

One of the reasons for different food preferences is that we have different experiences with food as we grow up. Apart from the biological factors, most of our food preferences are learned through experiences and there are several ways of learning about food (Nestle et al.,1998).

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2. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR MODELS

Models of buying behaviour have been developed since the 1940s to satisfy the objectives of describing and predicting consumer behaviour, so that a fuller understanding of customers, both present and prospective, is achieved (Chisnall 1995). For this author, of the many models of buying behaviour, the multivariable models are the most appropriate. As Schiffman and Kanuk (1994) argued, these are comprehensive models conceived to capture the dynamics of consumer decision-making and to provide a framework for consumer researchers to test the various dimensions of the models. The multivariable models emphasize that many buying decisions, even those reputedly based on purely economic considerations, are also subject to the so-called non-rational factors. People's needs and motivations are complex and they are likely to seek satisfaction at an economic level and also at deeper levels, involving emotions, cultural norms and values, group affiliations, etc. (Chisnall 1995).

2.1. The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model:

Since, it is not the aim of this study to make a thorough comparison of all the multivariable consumer behaviour models that have been developed, only the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) model (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard 1995), developed from the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model, will be described in more detail (Figure 1). This option is justified because, among the more comprehensive models (e.g., the Howard-Sheth model, the Nicosia model, and the Andreasan model), the EBM model seems to be simultaneously the more parsimonious and the one that can be applied with fewer problems to different decision situations and product categories.

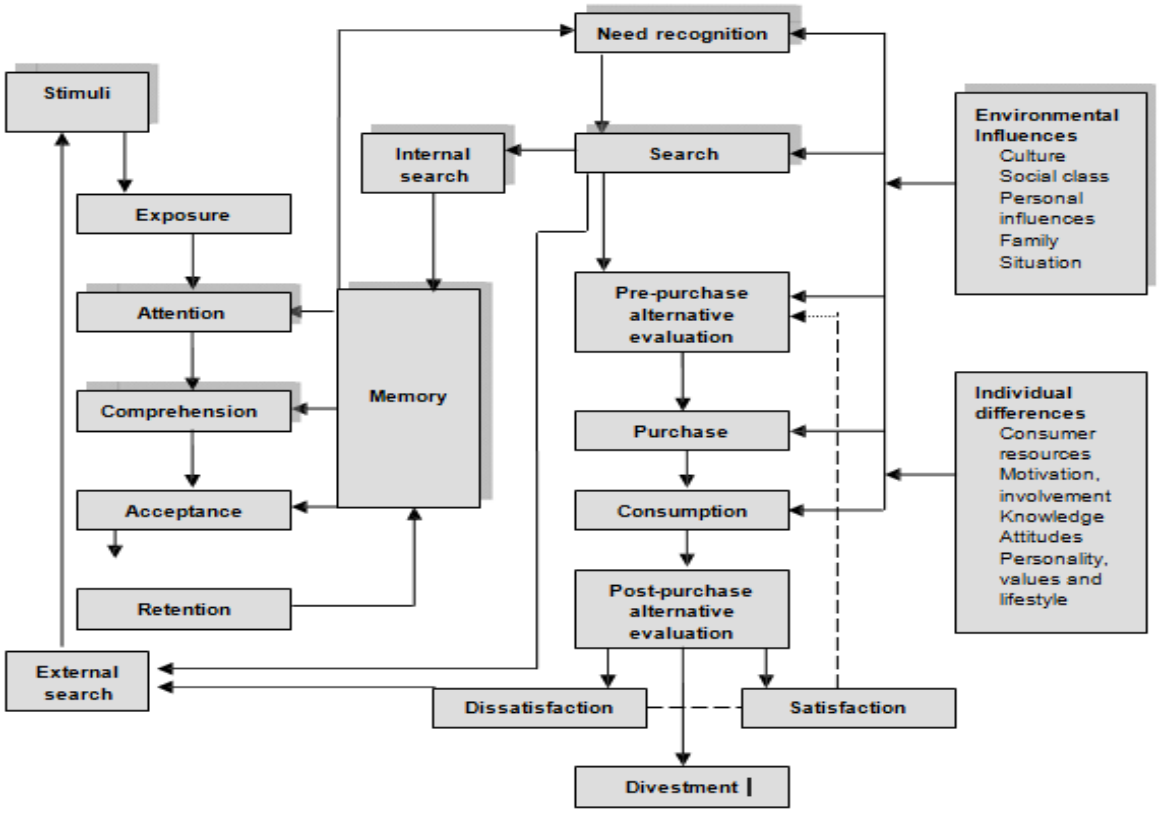

Figure 1: The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model

Source: Engel et al. (1995)

From Figure 1 it can be seen that the model consists of four sections: decision process stages; information input; information processing; and variables influencing the decision process. The focus of the model is on the decision process stages: problem recognition, search, pre-purchase alternative evaluation, purchase, consumption, post-purchase alternative evaluation, and divestment. As Schiffman and Kanuk (1994) stated, information from marketing and non-marketing sources feeds into the information-processing section of the model.

2.2. Consumer Behaviour Models Applied to Food:

Specific models of consumer behaviour with respect to food have been developed across the years. As happens with most of the general models, traditionally, the food models take a cognitive approach to consumer behaviour, where the decision-making process and the information processing of marketing stimuli are central to explain consumer behaviour (Verbeke 2000). Marshall (1995) argued that while there is recognition of external influences such as product availability and economic factors, most food choice models focus on the interaction between the individual and the food product. The decision process is facilitated by information processing mechanisms and conditioned by psychological, social, cultural, and social influences that, usually, are afforded a peripheral role.

One of the most pervasive models concerning consumer behaviour towards food is the model proposed by Steenkamp (1997). His model also distinguishes between the consumers' decision-making process with respect to foods, and the factors influencing this decision process. In the decision process, 'borrowed' from the EBM model, four stages are identified: need recognition, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, and choice. Three groups of factors influencing the decision process are recognized: properties of the food, factors related to the consumer, and environmental factors. According to the author, this grouping of factors is based on one of the earliest and most influential models of factors affecting the behaviour of food consumers, the Pilgrim model from 1957.

Comparing the Steenkamp model with the EBM model, the most noticeable difference is the lack of an explicit treatment of the information processing perspective. In the Steenkamp model, the marketing stimuli are spread across the three groups of factors and are considered to influence consumer behaviour in the same way as culture or the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. However, even Steenkamp (1997) acknowledges that the boundaries between the three groups of influencing factors are fuzzy and that mutual influences may occur.

In the Steenkamp model a special emphasis is given to the food product, as one of the major influences on food choice. The food product affects the decision process mainly through physiological effects and sensory perception. This focus is probably related to the fact that, in general, food products are commodities, sold unbranded or unlabelled and with poor or inexistent communication around them. Consequently, the models and the research dealing with consumer choice and behaviour relating to food are, mostly, concerned with the influence of physical and sensory properties of the products and of price. In summary, it can be said that the Steenkamp model is a simpler version of the EBM model, which emphasises aspects that are particular to food products.

More recently, Verbeke (2000) proposed a four component conceptual framework for analysing consumer decision-making towards fresh meat. As in the Steenkamp model, a four- stage model of the decision-making process forms the point of departure of his framework. However, in addition to the Steenkamp model, this model is linked first with a "hierarchy of effects" model and then, as in EBM model, concepts related to information-processing are implemented. Finally, the Steenkamp (1997) classification of factors or variables that potentially influence consumer decision-making is also adopted. According to Verbeke (2000), the "hierarchy of effects" indicates the different mental stages that consumers go through when making buying decisions and responding to marketing or non-commercial messages. Verbeke (2000) argues that while it is generally agreed that a structure including a cognitive, affective and conative component holds, no clear-cut evidence about the sequence and inter- dependency of these hierarchical steps appears to be available. For the author, in the current meat situation, specific attention is to be paid to potential influences on consumer decision- making that result from communication and marketing and, consequently, the information- processing concept should be included in the models.

It should be noted that there has been some criticism, even in the food field, of the cognitive-rational approach to the study of consumer behaviour. As Hansen (2002) argues, several researchers have suggested that the 'traditional' cognitive view should be complemented by taking into account consumers' affections, such as the possible emotional responses to the perception and judgement of products and of consumption experiences. Zajonc and Markus (1982) suggested that an individual can take action based on an emotional feeling that is without or with just a low level of cognitive activity. According to the authors, the reason for this is that positive emotions seem to affect consumer purchase behaviour positively.

For Garber et al. (2003), research is particularly difficult for food products because of the complex nature of consumer responses to them. However, this author argues that there is an accompanying cognitive component to any sensory

experience, in that prior experience with the same or similar products lends symbolic, associative and rhetorical meaning to any sensory experience. Also Hansen (2002) suggested that, generally, the consumer keeps an open mind towards useful stimuli in the environment, as is presupposed in the information processing perspective. To support the cognitive, information-processing perspective on consumer behaviour it can be added that cognitions might be beliefs about a food (e.g. about its health properties), attitudes toward a food (e.g. an overall evaluation), preferences for a food (e.g. plans to purchase or consume) (Conner et al. 1998). Attitudes can have an affective component and are not, necessarily, formed on completely rational grounds.

In conclusion, it can be argued that, in general, choice and consumption of a product are based on a cognitive decision-making process and take account of stimuli surrounding that choice and consumption. Past experience, sensory perception, and emotion or affect are important influences but, at some point of the experience with the product, an evaluation based on some criteria (objective or not) is made by the consumers of that product. Depending on the product and on the situation, the complexity of the choice may vary but, usually, there is a problem-solving approach to choice, even if affect or less rational factors influence the way people solve that problem. Thus, it can be said that the EBM model encompasses a wide range of situations and influences on consumer behaviour and, consequently, it can supply a basis for the analysis of behaviour relating to food.

3. ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION AND CHOICE OF FOOD

In spite of the connection of all the stages in the decision-making process and the four sections depicted in the EBM model, the aim of this study is to better understand how consumers choose food. Therefore, in this section special attention will be paid to the theory on that issue and to the factors that may influence consumers' alternative evaluation and choice of food products.

3.1. Alternative Evaluation:

According to Engel et al. (1995), the complexity of alternative evaluation will vary dramatically depending on the particular process consumers follow in their consumption decisions. When decision-making is habitual in nature, alternative evaluation will, usually, simply involve the consumer forming an intention to repurchase the same product as before. However, sometimes alternative evaluation can be quite complex. Consumers may employ a number of different evaluative criteria, and these criteria will usually vary in their relative importance or salience. The salience of evaluative criteria depends on a host of situational, product, and individual factors. Steenkamp (1997), reporting on a study involving 100 products and seven European countries, found that the five most important criteria used to evaluate food products are product quality, price, brand name/reputation, freshness, and guarantee.

According to Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason (1993), a preference judgement is typically defined as the outcome of a consumer's evaluation process. Preference is an expression of the emotional state or reaction of an assessor which leads to the choice of a preferred product. Garber, Hyatt, and *Starr* (2003) stated that in the food context is important to stress the notion that product performance alone is not the sole determinant of consumer preference and choice, but that all elements of the entire marketing-mix interact to influence consumer preference and choice. Asp (1999) qualifies this argument, stating that food preferences are related both to psychological and physiological perceptions of the sensory attributes of food. Bell and Marshall (2003) add that perception and acceptance of foods by humans is mediated by several factors, including expectation, sensory specific satiety, perceived risks, perceived ethnic origin, hunger, expectations of reward, and the level of uncertainty about a product's identity and sensory characteristics.

Much research into food is focused on sensory preference as the determinant of choice. For Raats et al. (1995), sensory preference is the hedonic dimension of acceptability. It can be defined as the consumer's affective response to a food product in a given context. The authors argue that sensory preference is an indicator of food acceptability which could or could not be a predictor of the consumer's behaviour. According to Asp (1999) and Richardson, MacFie, and Sheperd (1994), of the sensory attributes, taste is the one considered more important in food selection. Also, Raats et al. (1995) stated that it is clear that the taste of a food is a crucial parameter in determining food acceptability. However, these authors argue that when buying behaviour is examined it is equally clear to the researcher that taste is not the only crucial determinant, and in some cases is clearly well down the priority list.

Finally, for Engel et al. (1995), knowledge can also determine consumer's use of particular evaluative criteria. Knowledgeable consumers will have information stored in memory about the dimensions that are most useful for

comparing choice alternatives. Consequently, they will make evaluations more easily, look less for external sources of information and, therefore, it is more difficult to influence their decision. On the other hand, some consumers may be limited in their ability to accurately evaluate choice alternatives. These consumers may rely much more heavily on brand name or others' recommendations, because they lack the knowledge necessary for directly evaluating the product.

3.2. Choice and Purchase:

In the Steenkamp (1997) model, food choice is characterised as being in accordance with attitude theory, which posits that the product alternative for which consumers hold the most positive attitude will be the chosen product. However, he acknowledges that there are a number of factors that weaken the relation between attitude and choice in the context of foods. For example, pressures from the social environment, the degree of behavioural control, habit, and variety-seeking behaviour. In the EBM model, attitude is related to alternative evaluation and choice as an influencing factor.

In the EBM model, decision rules represent the strategies that consumers use to make a selection from the choice alternatives. These rules may be stored in memory and retrieved when needed. Alternatively, they may be constructed to fit situational contingencies. In any case, Garber et al. (2003), argue that purchase consideration and choice is a comparative process in which competing brands or products are evaluated.

For Engel et al. (1995), decision rules vary considerable in their complexity. They may be very simple, for example to repeat a previous purchase decision), or they can be quite complex, involving the consideration of multiple criteria. Another important distinction is between compensatory and non-compensatory decision rules. Non-compensatory decision rules do not permit product strengths to offset product weaknesses. In contrast, compensatory rules do allow product weaknesses to be compensated by product strengths. According to the same authors, when choice is habitual, and even when choice is not habitual, consumers may employ simplistic decision rules. This is explained by the fact that consumers continually make trade- offs between the quality of their choice and the amount of time and effort necessary to reach a decision. In many cases the consumer will follow decision rules that yield a satisfactory (as opposed to optimal) choice while minimizing their time and effort.

For Raats et al. (1995), there is a distinction between foods that are selected after detailed cognitive processing, which involve the use of structured attitude and belief models, and those that are not. For the latter products, it is more likely that sensory properties may well form good predictors, although the mediating effect of usage context will still be important. Moreover, at the point of purchase, expectations of the sensory properties may contribute to the perception of a product before consumption, and therefore impact on the choice decision. Bell and Meiselman (1994) also concluded that expectation can mediate food selection behaviour.

In more affluent cultures, as availability and cost recede in importance, preference is more in line with use. Liking is a major cause of preference but not the only cause. As with the use/preference comparison, as certain constraints (in this case health and social factors) fall into the background, liking becomes equivalent to preferring. Marshall (1995) counter-argued saying that 'people like what they eat' rather than 'eat what they like' and food choice is moulded by cultural representation, which dictates what is eaten long before food reaches the mouth.

4. FOOD QUALITY PERCEPTION

According to Steenkamp (1997) the criteria used by consumers in the evaluation of alternatives depend on the type of food product involved. The author discusses a study (AGB/Europanel, 1992) which investigated the importance of a large set of evaluative criteria for product choice in seven EU countries. One important conclusion of the study is that product quality is a summary construct, which subsumes many other aspects of the product. This conclusion is in accordance with the 'multi-attribute' approach to food quality, where quality is regarded as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and overall quality is described by a set of attributes as perceived by consumers. The buyer then forms an overall, one-dimensional quality evaluation by some weighing of the various attributes, which will determine its choice (Grunert, 1997).

4.1. The Quality Concept:

Issanchou (1996) argues that food quality is not an inherent characteristic of the food, but is closely allied with the concept of acceptability and, therefore, is more relevant to speak about perceived quality. The interpretations of quality between these extremes include quality as value, quality as excellence, and quality as the adaptation to expectations. However, Booth (1995) argued that it is increasingly recognised that the basis on which any assessment of product quality is formed must, in the end, be the attitudes of the users.

In a comment on Booth's paper, Moskowitz (1995) stated that quality can be related to two factors – the subject's self-designed ideal, and the location of the product on a continuum at some distance from this ideal. The distance of the product to the ideal (its quality) will differ among consumers and among usage situations. Zeithaml (1988) also defined perceived quality as the result of the consumer's judgement about a product's overall excellence or superiority. According to Northen (2000), the perceived quality approach analyses product quality from the view point of the consumer, making quality a subjective assessment dependent on perception, needs and goals of the individuals.

To better understand the theory on quality perception it is important to first clarify some concepts incorporated from those different approaches. According to Grunert (1997), from the perspective of an economics of information approach, product attributes can be categorized as search, experience and credence attributes. Search attributes, such as colour or fat content for meat, can be evaluated before purchase. Experience attributes, such as taste or juiciness, can be evaluated only after the purchase, during the consumption experience

According to Grunert (1997), to some extent the distinction between search, experience and credence characteristics has been incorporated into multi-attribute models by the distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes

According to Northen (2000), a more recently accepted view of perceived quality and attribute types is the one where customers' perceptions of quality prior to purchase are based on quality cues. Quality cues are any informational stimuli that can be ascertained through the senses prior to consumption and, according to the consumer, have predictive validity for the product's quality performance upon consumption (Steenkamp 1997). Ophuis and Van Trijp (1995) argue that quality cues can be ascertained by the senses prior to consumption, whereas quality attributes are benefit-generating product aspects and cannot be observed prior to consumption.

Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996) argue that a distinction can be made between intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues. Intrinsic cues are part of the physical product. They cannot be changed without also changing the physical product itself, in contrast with extrinsic cues, which are predominantly marketing related. In the case of food, intrinsic cues include visual cues such as colour, fat trim and marbling, in addition to non-visual cues such as smell. Extrinsic cues include price, brands, labels, shop, country-of-origin, and information. Northen (2000) stated that extrinsic cues have the capacity to communicate both experience and credence attributes. In contrast, intrinsic cues are not able to communicate credence attributes; hence, the only way of successfully predicting credence attributes will be through the use of extrinsic cues. However, intrinsic cues will be more successful in predicting experience attributes.

4.2. The Zeithaml Model:

The hierarchical models, in which means-end chain theory (Gutman 1982) is the most common approach, have in common the notion that consumers may infer some attributes from others. These may be attributes at the same level of abstraction, but in most cases the inference will be from the concrete to the abstract.

Quality has been included in multi-attribute models as a lower level attribute. However, Zeithaml (1988) proposes an adaptation of a model first developed by Dodds and Monroe (1985) (*in* Zeithaml 1988), where perceived quality is a second-order phenomenon, an abstract attribute. The model, depicted in Figure 2, defines and relates price, perceived quality, and perceived value, and gathers results from past research on those concepts. The model, which is proposed for all types of products, can clearly be applied to food products.

In the model perceived quality, a higher-level attribute, is an overall judgement based on perceptions of extrinsic and intrinsic attributes. Perceived price influences both the perceived quality and the perceived sacrifice. Zeithaml (1988) further explains that in the means-end chains, value, like perceived quality, is proposed to be a higher level abstraction but differs from quality in two ways. First, value is more individualistic and personal and second, value involves a trade-off of 'give' and 'get' components, that is the difference between the value of benefits conferred by the product and the 'cost' of acquiring them. Extrinsic attributes serve as 'value signals' and can substitute for active weighing of benefits and cost. Finally, the perception of value depends on the frame of reference in which the consumer is making an evaluation and the perceived value affects the relationship between quality and purchase.

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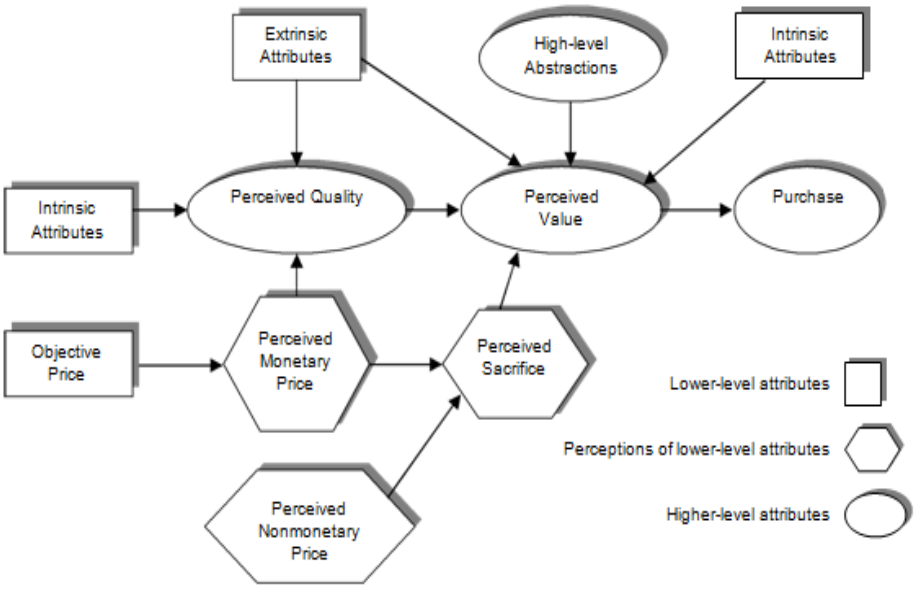

Figure 2: The Zeithaml Model

Source: Zeithaml (1988)

4.3. The Total Food Quality Model:

The integrative approaches try to integrate the other approaches into a unified framework for the analysis of quality perception process for food products. Two of the most notable cases of this integration are the Quality Guidance Model (QGM) of Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996), and the Total Food Quality Model (TFQM) of Grunert et al. (1996) depicted in Figure 3.

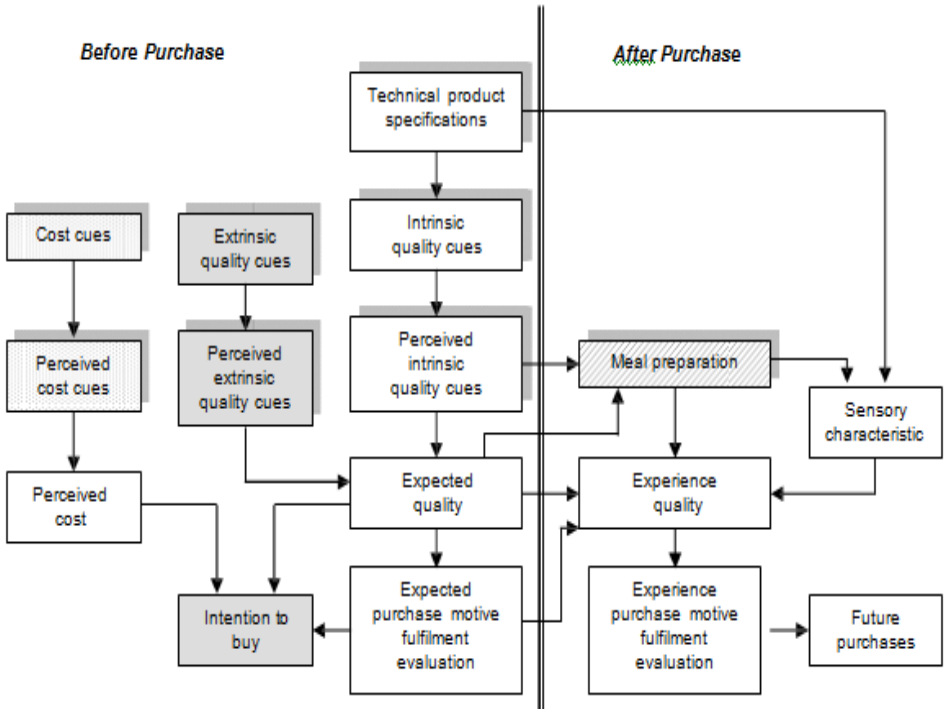

Figure 3: The Total Food Quality Model (TFQM)

Source: Grunert (1997)

Grunert (1997) does a summary description of the model, emphasising that the basis of the TFQM is the distinction between before and after purchase evaluations. Most food products have search characteristics only to a limited degree. In order to make a choice, the consumer will develop quality expectations but it is only after consumption that experienced quality can be determined, and even this is limited in case of credence characteristics.

The pre-purchase component of the model shows how quality expectations are formed based on the quality cues available. The intrinsic quality cues are related to the product's technical specifications, i.e., characteristics that can be measured objectively. The extrinsic quality cues represent all other characteristics, such as brand name, price, packaging, etc. Of all the cues consumers are exposed to, only those which are perceived will have an influence on expected quality (Grunert et al. 2004).

According to the TFQM, quality is not an aim in itself, but is desired because it helps to satisfy purchase motives or values. The values sought by consumers will, in turn, have an impact on which quality dimensions are sought and how different cues are perceived and evaluated. Expected quality and expected fulfilment of purchase motives constitute the positive consequences consumers expect from buying a food product, and are offset against the negative consequences in the form of costs. The trade-off determines intention to buy. Price can be both a cost cue and an extrinsic quality cue.

Compared with the Zeithaml model, it can be said that the TFQM does not explicitly include price as an extrinsic cue. Additionally, the model does not consider perceived value as a higher-level abstraction, incorporating instead perceived quality and perceived cost (which can be interpreted as the perceived sacrifice proposed by the first model). However, the later model is more precise about the process of expectations formation and its relation with experience and satisfaction. This is possible because the TFQM was developed especially for the perception and evaluation of food quality and, consequently, can better analyse those processes which, sometimes, cannot be generalized to other categories of products.

4.4. Extensions and Other Models:

Issanchou (1996) also points out that determinants of perceived quality of a given product will differ depending if quality perception is considered prior to purchase, at the point of purchase or upon consumption. However, this does not imply that perceived quality attributes at one of the stages do not influence the perception of quality at another stage.

Depending on previous information and experience, quality cues are used at the point of purchase to infer expected quality attributes. However, it is not always possible for the consumer to infer experience quality attributes from quality cues available at the point of purchase. In such cases, and when consumers are involved with the product, perceived risk tends to be higher. The same logic can be applied to credence attributes. Moreover, as in the TFQM, Issanchou (1996) argues that, upon consumption, sensory attributes are the most important experience quality attributes of food. However, he also recognises that expectations affect the perception of experience quality attributes.

Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996) argued that their model and the TFQM share a number of aspects; however, the focus of the two models is somewhat different. The TFQM elaborates on the integration phase and also incorporates purchase intention, while the QGM gives much attention to the abstraction phase. For Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996), the TQFM is more comprehensive, while the QGM is easier to operationalize and quantify in empirical settings.

Poulsen et al. (1996) pointed out that one limitation of the QGM is its concern only with intrinsic cues, and that extrinsic cues may have an important influence in the quality formation process. This is even more important because the attributes of food are mainly experience and credence attributes, for which consumers also use extrinsic cues to form their quality expectations. Additionally, the model does not consider the influence of other factors in the formation of expectations or in quality evaluation. However, these influences are taken into account in the model of consumer behaviour proposed by the same authors (Steenkamp 1997).

Becker (2000) proposed the Consumer Attribute Model to analyse consumer behaviour towards food, which, he argued, is rather similar to the QGM. However, in the Becker model the role of extrinsic cues on the formation of perceptions is introduced as an important one. Becker's framework intends to link together quality as perceived by consumer, and quality as managed and produced by private and regulation public organisations, and it makes the distinction between product characteristics that are objectively defined by producers, and product attributes that are perceived by consumers.

In conclusion, the three dimensions of quality are regarded as the basis for perceived quality, so, as in the extension of the QGM by Poulsen et al. (1996), an overall, uni-dimensional measure of perceived quality, composed of three constructs, is modelled. Becker emphasises the role of the industry in defining characteristics of the product in what concerns shopping, sensory and 'process, safety and nutritional' quality, and the way these characteristics are communicated through extrinsic or intrinsic cues. The several definitions of quality included in the model can be interpreted as the quality continuum defined by Hansen (2001).

More recently, Bernués et al. (2003) proposed a conceptual model of supply, perception and demand of food quality that gathers together several aspects of the models built by Becker (2000), Grunert (1997), Steenkamp (1997) and Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996). The model differs from the TFQ model in four main aspects. First, as in the Becker (2000) model, the supply of quality by industry is explicitly represented, emphasising the implications for the intrinsic, extrinsic and cost characteristics of the product. Second, expected quality, formed in the purchasing situation, is also separated into search and credence quality. Third, perceived overall quality is conceptualised as being influenced by search, credence and experienced quality. Finally, the overall perceived quality, together with the dynamic and increasingly diverse personal and environmental factors, as defined by Steenkamp (1997), determine the purchasing motives, that are linked with credence and expected quality.

Additionally, Bredahl (2004), in an empirical study on quality expectations and quality experience, found that both have two underlying constructs, health quality and eating quality. In other words, when evaluating experience quality consumers also consider health quality (a credence attribute), which is determined by their expectations in this dimension and by experienced eating quality. Expected health quality is formed only on the basis of extrinsic cues. In his model, Bredahl also includes past purchases, which directly influence expected eating quality, and future purchases, which are also explained by the two constructs of experienced quality.

Hoffmann (2000) also separates expectations and perception after purchase (experience) into two constructs: food quality and food safety. For this author, expected food quality and expected food safety are determined by perceptions of extrinsic and intrinsic cues and perceptions, and expectations can also be influenced by other factors such as socio-economic factors, attitudes, preferences, and prior experiences. These factors also have an influence on experienced food quality and safety. Another different feature of this model is that it allows the possibility of experience and credence characteristics being communicated via intrinsic or extrinsic quality cues, created by a party perceived as trustworthy by consumers.

In summary, from the models described in this section perceived quality can by conceptualized as a global assessment of the product based on extrinsic or intrinsic cues. If the costs (monetary or other) are considered, consumers form another higher-level abstraction, which Zeithaml (1988) designated as perceived value. Quality perceptions are defined by expected quality (before purchase) and experienced quality (after consumption). In more recent models, these two constructs have been hypothesised to be composed of two other constructs, which can be designated as eating (i.e. sensory) quality and credence (e.g. health, safety) quality.

5. CONCLUSION

The process connection food preferences and food choice is not straight forward and explicable. According to Wądołowskaet al.(2008) food preferences interact with different food choice factors (such as advertising, functional, health, price, sensory and socio-cultural) and sociodemographic features of the consumer (such as age, economic condition, education, gender, region of residence and size of the place of residence), which again interacts with the frequency of food intake (Wądołowskaet al.,2008).

It has been shown that people who have different food choice motives differs in preferences for selected food products (Wądołowskaet al.,2008). Food choice remains a complicated area of study and consumers' choices are affected by a great variety of factors as previously mentioned. The actual decision making process remains somewhat unclear,partly because of its complexity but also due to the food choice process multifaceted nature. In addition, the fact that it is of interest to several disciplines contributes to its complexity since all disciplines may approach the matter from different point of views, thus illuminating different processes.

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