



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Food Habits Driven Institutional Mess Recipes: Case of a B-School

Rajnandan Patnaik

Professor, General Management, Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur, India

Abstract:

Institution's hostel residents choose their meals based on their food habits, with less consideration to other factors such as nutrition or hygiene. It is important to understand that food habit of inmates drives the menu (institutional food recipe) of such institutions, not necessarily with any regard to nutritional requirements of such population. However, this food habits driven food recipes that are followed in academic institutions provides a good starting point to understand the nutritional requirements of students and its actual deliverance. This research takes cue from food habits, institutional food recipe, preference of population and nutrition; and proposes to study the link between food habits and institutional food recipes, and finds the nutritional aspects of such recipes. The link between food habits, institutional food recipes, and nutrition is essential to understand the nutrition demand and nutrition supply for the population. Arguably, if there is gap in nutrition demand and supply, then the same can be corrected by changing the nutrition inputs. This research seeks to recommend not only to measure the nutrition gap, but also to bring a change in recipe to meet nutritional need. This paper studies the link between food habits and institutional food recipes, and finds the nutritional aspects of such recipes.

Keywords: Institution food, mess recipe, food habits, nutrition, B-school

1. Introduction

Academic institutional resident students sometimes choose their meals as per their requirements. Their requirements are usually based on their food habits that they prefer over other options. It is also evident that residential students (hostel inmates) of academic institutions in India prefer Indian food over other types and to take it further, even regional food habits are preferred by hostel inmates. Moreover, resident students in hostels who have ethnicity from a region of India prefer that region's food. For example, a student from Punjab prefers Punjabi food, a student from Gujarat prefers Gujarati food, and so on. It is important to understand that food habit of inmates drives the menu (institutional food recipe) of such institutions, not necessarily with any regard to nutritional requirements of such population. However, this food habits driven food recipes that are followed in academic institutions provides a good starting point to understand the nutritional requirements of students and its actual deliverance.

2. Objective

This research takes cue from food habits, institutional food recipe, preference of population and nutrition; and proposes to study the link between food habits and institutional food recipes, and finds the nutritional aspects of such recipes.

The link between food habits, institutional food recipes, and nutrition is essential to understand the nutrition demand and nutrition supply for the population. Arguably, if there is gap in nutrition demand and supply, then the same can be corrected by changing the nutrition inputs. As food is the primary source of nutrition input, this research would try to ascertain and recommend change in food intake of the population (if needed) by changing the institutional food recipes. This research also expects to change the food habits of its population through its nutritional food recommendation.

Numerous pilot studies have shown that institutional inmates (hostel students), especially in professional educational institutions ignore their nutritional needs and seek convenient, fast, and tasty food. However, these foods are usually unbalanced and sometimes unhealthy, and thus have little chance to meet the nutritional needs of the population. Most institutions know this but do not want to change their food recipes as the older recipes are tried to be more acceptable to the student population. This research seeks to recommend not only to measure the nutrition gap, but also to bring a change in recipe to meet nutritional need. Further, this research will broadly put an action plan to implement the same. The implications of this research will perhaps have healthier institution inmates in hostels and a change in lifestyle eating habits of its population for good.

3. Literature Review

Indian educational institutions are changing traditional gatekeeper patterns regarding food preparation. College students seem to be eating out more than ever before (fast foods, restaurants, and many other kinds of public eating-places) or obtaining away-from-home foods (delis, meals-on-wheels) as an alternative to hostel food [1], [2]. However, some of these institutional inmates (hostel students) influence or create their own food-menu that institutions embrace, seldom with regard to required nutrition. Institutional food recipes have been an integral way to illustrate principles of nutrition, food preparation for over a century [3]. With the time constraints of the degree program, the increasing dependence of institutional inmates (hostel students) on the use their preferred recipes are being adapted [4], [5].

Lewin [6] postulated that food habits research needed to identify food choices and the forces influencing decisions (e.g. food recipes and individual food choices). However, institutional food recipes, driven by individual's food choices based on taste and preferences, seldom regard nutrition as a deciding factor in food choice [7], [8]. This research takes the cue on three constructs, validated in studies of [2], food preferences, institutional food recipe, and nutritional value [9]. The purpose of this study is also to revisit Lewin's gatekeeper theory to study the institutional students and their nutrition, with food preferences asked to the participants and the nutritional information taken from the institutional food recipes [10].

4. Research Question

This research takes cue from all of the above and proposes to study the link between food habits and institutional food recipes, and finds the nutritional aspects of such recipes. The above research puzzle fundamentally points to two research questions: (i) Do food habits in India drive institutional food recipes? And (ii) Do these food recipes meet the nutritional requirement of the population?

5. Research Methodology

Event-history technique is the micro-research design, which is a simplified form of the meso-research design of Case Analysis, where the theory is tested with the multiple cases at hand. Each subject is considered as a case here, with its idiosyncrasies and peculiarity. Moreover, this meso macro-research design is actually a part of the macro-research design, where analytic induction technique is used, to get the answer to the research question as mentioned in the above section. Hence, this research can be seen as the part of the bigger research, the macro-research design where answer to research questions are achieved across local and regional levels and tested through a variety of subjects (cases) from local area (Business School), the regional area of Central India and the overall region of India.

The unit of the study is 'the individual subject'. The concept of subject as individual is to be seen as a part of the emerging view of institution as social system, where the interrelated choices of individuals compete and cooperate to form a community of symbiotically related choices [11]. Further, the participants define the boundaries of the study, rather than the researcher trying to impose somewhat arbitrary external boundaries [12]. However, the social definition of an institution contrasts with more conventional perspective of substitute choices [13], or group-think, where groups of individuals agree on a choice for the sake of group choice over individual choice [14], [13]. It should be noted that in both the conventional definitions, the competitive interactions of the individual choices are assumed, ignoring cooperative or neutral interactions. This research intends to incorporate all types of possible interactions (cooperative, competitive or neutral) as any or all of them together can be an important function in the choice of food recipe in an institution.

6. Data Collection

This research is based on an institution – a national reputed business school in central India and the Post Graduate students who pursue management education therein. Arguably, the reason for choosing a management institution is that the choices of food in hostels are superior to general college or university hostels. When the institution and its students are open to more food recipe choices, this research derives its richness in answering the first research question with larger diversity. Further, the presence of the Institution in central India is likely to bring local and regional food habits as a causal factor for food recipe choice.

This research is based on survey questionnaires, where some pointed questions were asked based on likert scale to ascertain some factors of correlation, such as food habits driving food recipes and nutrition, to establish the answers to the research questions. Further, to ascertain the answer to the second research question, this research has also employed an open ended survey questionnaire to the above-said student population and documented their diverging qualitative responses in a case-study manner. These case-study (34 in number) were used as per the above mentioned analytic-induction technique with multiple cases.

The typical responses on food was that the subjects preferred to eat staple foods belonging to their region (such as subjects from central India preferred Poha-Chana as their preferred breakfast/snack), yet were open to other foods that were accepted nationally (such as Idli-Vada-Sambar as breakfast). In almost all the respondents, food taste came first, followed by nutrition. Oily and masala food were preferred over boiled or steamed food. Fast foods were preferred over traditional meals and high calorie foods were not seen with disdain. On the whole, the food taste drove the institution mess recipe and food schedule. Each response (case) is further broken down qualitatively and analysis done to modify or reinforce the answers to the research questions.

7. Analysis and Conclusion

It is seen that similar studies mostly incorporate a modified form of analytic induction [15], [16], combined with cases [17], as a flexible technique for obtaining, ordering and analyzing primarily qualitative instances [18], [19], [20] that we will find from each case. As such, the cases include the retrospective longitudinal and processual analysis techniques of Pettigrew [20], including his emphasis on content, context and process.

Analytic induction commences from an existing theoretical position, and then compares the theory, or emerging theory, with the evidence obtained by each case study, prepared on the basis of its possible contribution to answering the question and the answer itself is then modified in the light of such cases [18]. This iterative process of systematic comparison-analysis of case and plausible solution to the research question is repeated until the answer is generalized, evidenced by the many case instances.

From the analysis of the cases, it was found that food habits of hostel inmates (students) drive institutional food recipes and their schedule. Moreover, these food recipes had little consideration to the nutritional requirement of the population. Even food hygiene factor was tided over in favor to food taste.

8. Ethical Considerations

All participation by human (subjects) was voluntary, and participants were sought verbal consent prior to participation. In addition, participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and they were provided the right to obtain the aggregate results of the study, if they so wished. The researcher did not reveal the full purpose of the study because the internal validity of the experiment would have been compromised. There was a debriefing at the end of the survey stating the data requirements and necessity of the procedure. Participants were treated with dignity, and their rights and welfare were not interfered. The research can be seen more as cerebral and does not pose any potential harm or risk to any participant. After due sharing of the results, the participants gave the feedback that they intend to consider nutritional requirements in designing institutional mess recipes in future.

9. Expected Limitations

This research seeks both “data-trends” and “rock-data”. However, getting primary data from a limited student population from one congregation of students may be a limitation in itself on generalizing of findings. Moreover, data collection from primary sources (individual cases) can be a biased account of an individual, open to personal preferences and tastes, and is enormous and difficult to analyze in qualitative terms for reasons of diversity in response.

The explanation and findings presented in this research is done with respect to idiosyncratic instances or (individual) cases, which cannot be applied empirically in its current state. This is because; the certain attributes enjoyed by an individual (such as the economic state, food habits of the family, exposure to different cuisines, and so on) may not exist in others. This research may not identify the portability of findings over other academic institutions.

10. References

- i. Lin, B., Frazao, E. & Guthrie, J. 1999. Away-from-Home Foods Increasingly Important to Quality of American Diet. Economic Research Service, USDA.
- ii. Hertzler, A.A. & Frary, R. 1992. Dietary status and eating out practices of college students. *Journal of the American Diet Association*, 92, 867–869.
- iii. Hertzler, A.A. 1983. Recipes and nutrition education. *Journal of the American Diet Association*, 83, 466–471.
- iv. Grandgenett, R.S. 1998. Practice points: translating research into practice: watching the trends helps focus nutrition education strategies. *Journal of the American Diet Association*, 98, 1000.
- v. Fredericks, D.C. 1999. Public health nutrition: Integrating services for community wellness. *Journal of the American Diet Association*, 99, 1551.
- vi. Lewin, K. 1943. Forces Behind Food Habits and Methods of Change, in the Problems of Changing Food Habits, Bulletin 108. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC.
- vii. Hertzler, A.A. & Frary, R.B. 1995. College students’ nutrition information networks. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 24, 191–202.
- viii. Hertzler, A.A. & Pearson, J. 1985. Applied nutrition communicating information through recipes. *Illinois Teacher*, 27, 158–159.
- ix. Hertzler, A.A. & Bruce, F.A. 2002. Cooking, recipe use and food habits, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 26, pp 340-345.
- x. Mitchell, J. 2003. Institutional Recipes as a Source of Information about Food Habits, *Food Service Technology*, Vol 3, pp 157-165.
- xi. Van de Ven, A.H. & Garud, R. 1989. A Framework for Understanding the Emergence of New Industries. *Research on Technological Innovation, Management and Policy*, Vol.4, pp 195-225.
- xii. Hannan, M.T. & Freeman, J. 1977. The Population Ecology of Organizations. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, pp 929-964.
- xiii. Porter, M.E. 1980. *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries & Competitors*. The Free Press: New York.
- xiv. Kool, K. & Dierickx, I. 1993. Rivalry, Strategic Groups and Firm Profitability. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 14, pp 47-59.
- xv. Denzin, N.K. 1978. *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 2nd Edition. McGraw-Hill: New York.
- xvi. Yin, R.K. 1994. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2nd Edition. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

- xvii. Wollin, A.S. 1996. Rigor in Theory Building from Cases. Presented at ANZAM '96 Conference: 6th – 8th December, 1996. Woolongong, Australia.
- xviii. Wollin, A.S. 1995. A Hierarchy-Based Punctuated Equilibrium Model of the Process of Emergence and Change of New Rural Industries, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Commerce and Administration, Griffith University, Australia.
- xix. Eisenhardt, K.M. 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*. Vol.14, No.4, pp 532-550.
- xx. Pettigrew, A.M. 1995. Longitudinal Field Research on Change: Theory and Practice, in Huber, G.P., Van de Ven, A.H. (Eds.), *Longitudinal Research Methods: Studying Processes of Organisational Change*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, California.