

The Influence of Culture on Consumer Preferences

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Abstract: *Man's behaviour is very complex and it is difficult to comprehend it only with what is called culture. Human behaviour varies from culture to culture, and consequently their preferences, during selection of food, are also different. So, the topic of this work is to describe the influence of culture on the selection of food, and therefore the goal is to prove that its influence of culture, in the time that we are living in, is much more less in compare with earlier period of time. In most countries, and also in our country, people don't pay attention what kind of food we eat, and from which cultures that food belongs. We are witnesses that there are different cultures with different values. With the development of human society and technological improvement, this differences and specificities decreased. It's important to point out, that the way of life of one society suffer a lot of change, and influence of culture on the way of life has no more significance, as it had before. Since the culture has less influence on the consumer, when he choosing food, many become aware of the fact that almost there are not existing traditional cooking. The originality of certain foods is too difficult to determine, because a influences of different cultures are present everywhere. At the present time, the culture has universal values, and individual accept this values as his own, regardless if they originated from other environment.*

Keywords: *Consumer preferences, Culture, consumer, traditional cooking*

1. Introduction

Man's behaviour is very complex and it is difficult to comprehend it only with what is called culture. However, in order to develop himself and survive, human needs help of others, which means that human become social being with his birth. Consequently, he has to learn the way of life and how to survive in the community. So, a term "culture" should represent the way of life and standards of behaviour, which are adopted by the members of a society.¹ Human behaviour varies from culture to culture, and consequently their preferences, during selection of food, are also different. We are witnesses that there are different cultures with different values. With the development of human society and technological improvement, this differences and specificities decreased. At the present time, the culture has universal values, and individual accept this values as his own, regardless if they originated from other environment. One of the best example are industrial products and food, that are not skills of some people or the environment any more.

It's important to point out, that the way of life of one society suffer a lot of change, and influence of culture on the way of life has no more significance, as it had before. Since the culture has less influence on the consumer, when he choosing food, many become aware of the fact that almost there are not existing traditional cooking. The originality of certain foods is too difficult to determine, because a influences of different cultures are present everywhere. Like a people, meals are subject to spreading in some areas and become so popular, while in others, from where they are originated, simply disappeared. There is very small quantity of traditional

¹ S. Fočo, (2000): „ Čovjek i demokratske promjene“, Sarajevo, BiH.

meals, not only in our country, but in many other countries, and there are plenty of international meals. There are many advantages from the presence of different cultures in one place, which also include and different foods, because it provide us the possibility to choose what is the best for us.²

It is considered that the cultural environment, where consumers live, is the place where certain diet habits are born, which are passed from generation to generation. But this diet habits, that are born in one culture, or in one nation, more and more fall into oblivion. Which kind of food would consumer take and consume, depends from various other factors, and that factors he cannot have controlled in this tempo of life. Once upon a time, the culture of the country, where consumers live, had been restricted and regulated by their behaviour, during buying a food.³ So, people devoted much more importance to culture, when it comes to food choices. Family lunch had been much respected and a food that had consumed, was carefully chosen. Now, many people believe that the culture of food is subject to change, and many people do not pay enough attention to the duration of the meal, and consequently they are not enough interested in what kind of food purchased and consume. The influence of culture on buying and consuming certain kind of foods, doesn't have significance, as they had 10 or 15 years ago. The main reasons why we have moved away from traditional food are fast pace of life, the globalization of food trade, more processed foods in the market, increase food consumption outside the home, especially fast food. So, the topic of this work is to describe the influence of culture on the selection of food, and therefore the goal is to prove that its influence of culture, in the time that we are living in, is much more less in compare with earlier period of time. In most countries, and also in our country, people don't pay attention what kind of food we eat, and from which cultures that food belongs.

Starting from the objective, which we are trying to prove, we define three arguments. The first indicates that in this period of time, due to the strong impact of globalization in one country, are present many cultures, which carry with themselves the different food habits. Then, the second argument is, due to today's fast way of life, more and more people use prepared foods, and we do not think whether this food has been eaten by the peoples of our culture 30 or 50 years ago. And finally, it has been proved that cultural differences are less when it comes to food choices and it becomes the elements of universality.

2. The Culture And The Way How It Influence On Food Choices

There are many influences of culture around the world. Due this influences, there are many differences in diet as well as in eating habit. No matter of this difference, they are intertwined, and have a significant influence one on another. This means, in our time, not a single culture does not restrict or prohibit their people to consume food of another culture. Many countries, including our country, are subject to the influences of other cultures. So, in the restaurants of major cities can be found Italian, Greek, French, Japanese, and Chinese specialties. One of the example is Germany, where is popular international kitchen. There are more Italian restaurants in Munich, than in Milan. In every bigger city there are many Turkish "doner stand" and the Greek "Giros stand". Also a Spanish "tapas", the Japanese "sushi" and American "baguette" are very popular.⁴ So, this is evidence that in one country is not represented only one culture, but there are present many cultures in one place, which could mutual interfere, complement each other, and thereby enhance and give a special sence to the universal culture today. However, it is generally considered that the food in certain way is special in every culture. No matter what kind of food some culture decides to choose, it is important that the food is healthy and safe and doesn't cause negative influence on our health.

² Penpece, D., (2006): " Tüketici davranışlarını belirleyene etmenler: Kültürün tüketici davranışlarını etkisi", Yüksek lisans tezi, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, Kahramanmaraş.

³ http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/fina_papizza/kultura-hrane-ono-si-sto-jedes.html

⁴ <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,3383075,00.html>

On the menus of the Western world kitchen, in the last few years, start to expand industrial processed food, but it is the case also in the diet of many developing countries.⁵ So, in the world today, it's prevail habit that people eat and live fast, not only in the Western world, but in the all world. For many people around the world, culture doesn't have importance in many segments of life, including the food. For example, even though the Oriental culture diet is very healthy, people from that part of the world are increasingly consuming food from the west, and more and more enjoy it.

In today's world people are familiar with the food habits of the Chinese people, and this habits are the best represent of the Chinese culture. Dishes of rice could be prepared in different ways and it's impossible to imagine Chinese meal without this kind of food. We can say with certain that Chinese cuisine is one of the world's most famous kitchen, and we can find it everywhere in the world, and therefore it all people enjoy in this kitchen, regardless which culture belong this part of the world.

For instance, country with a specific culture, as well as with diet, is Japan. The diet culture in Japan is completely different from diet culture that Europeans are used to. The specificity of the Japanese diet culture could be seen in the best way on their traditional food, called sushi, this is the example of the consumption of raw fish. From our perspective and according to our diet culture, consumption of raw fish, without any cooking or baking, is completely unacceptable, but it shouldn't stop us to try it out, in order that we can decide about quality of that food, and is it convenient and good for our organism. What is very interesting and important, when you come in some country, is that everybody will offer you traditional cooking, regardless which culture you belong.

The best evidence that many cultures lose their significance, it could be seen from the example of younger generation. Under the influence of western culture, they increasingly use so-called "fast food". So, everywhere in the world, including in our country, the diet became closer to some global standards of cuisine. More and more people consume food like: Pizza, McDonalds, then "European" menu in restaurants, which include more meat and bread. The kitchen that no one people leave indifferent is Bosnian-Herzegovinian kitchen.

Bosnian kitchen, as well as Bosnian culture, is heavily influenced by Eastern and Western world.⁶ It is believed that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian diet culture cherishes in a special way, but not as much as many years ago. In the meanwhile the lack of time imposed new trends. Our people doesn't have enough free time to prepare our traditional food, since that it require a lot of effort, but consume a lot of time. So, in today's world, many people are forced in some way to prepare something quickly, and something that is not in the accordance with our culture and tradition. However, it is important that the tourists, which come from different parts of the world, are delighted with our traditional cuisine, what is the best reflection of the culture from Bosnian-Herzegovinian people. That indicate the diet culture of some people is not a relevant factor that will restrict people to try something new, which is different from the food that they consume in their own country, and which has a completely different culture, and therefore the different food habits.

A few years ago people used to live in an environment where there haven't been many influences from other cultures. Through this way, they became more interesting in what kind of food they consume and to decide are they allowed, according to their cultural traditions, buy and consume food, which originated from other culteres. Nations with different culture. However, regardless how much people respect some culture in their countries, the youngest generation, as well as older generation, in situation when they are outside of their homes, are exposed to different offers of food, that belongs to other cultures. Now, everywhere in the world, there are restaurants which serving and presenting food, which belongs to nation with completely different culture. Many people would like to try something new, without some thinking about it. In doing so, they will not have any prejudices about the food, which belongs to people with different culture.

⁵ <http://www.dijeta.co/sto-se-jede-u-svijetu/>

⁶ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hrvatska_kuhinja_u_Bosni_i_Hercegovini

From this we can conclude that culture is not a restricting factor when we deciding which food we would choose, even though many years ago it was restricting factor. So, people's consciousness has been changed a lot, as well as their preferences have become also very different. Most people choose what they like at a certain moment and what makes them happy, no matter which culture, that food belongs.

3. Turkish Kitchen and Culture Influence On Food Choices in Turkey

One of the best kitchen in the world is Turkish kitchen. Turkish cuisine is largely the continuation of Ottoman cuisine, which in turn borrowed many elements from Greek, Central Asian, Caucasian, Sephardi Jewish cuisine, Middle Eastern, and Balkan cuisines. Turkish cuisine has in turn influenced those and other neighbouring cuisines, including those of Central and Western Europe. The Ottomans fused various culinary traditions of their realm with influences from Levantine cuisines, along with traditional Turkic elements from Central Asia, creating a vast array of specialities—many with strong regional associations. Turkish cuisine and Iranian cuisine on the other hand have heavy mutual influence on each other, due to geographical proximity, ethnic relations many common cultural aspects, shared empires, and conquering's by such as the Achaemenids, Sassanians, Seljuks, Safavids, Afsharids, Ottomans and Qajars.⁷

Turkish cuisine varies across the country. The cooking of Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir, and rest of the Aegean region inherits many elements of Ottoman court cuisine, with a lighter use of spices, a preference for rice over bulgur, koftes and a wider availability of vegetable stews, eggplant, stuffed dolmas and fish. The cuisine of the Black Sea Region uses fish extensively, especially the Black Sea anchovy and includes maize dishes. The cuisine of the southeast -Urfa, Gaziantep and Adana- is famous for its variety of kebabs, mezes and dough-based desserts such as baklava, şöbiyet, kadayıf and künefe.

Especially in the western parts of Turkey, where olive trees grow abundantly, olive oil is the major type of oil used for cooking. The cuisines of the Aegean, Marmara and Mediterranean regions are rich in vegetables, herbs, and fish. Central Anatolia has many famous specialties, such as keşkek, mantı and gözleme. A specialty's name sometimes includes that of a city or region, either in or outside of Turkey, and may refer to the specific technique or ingredients used in that area. For example, the difference between Urfa kebab and Adana kebab is the thickness of the skewer and the amount of hot pepper that the kebab contains. Urfa kebab is less spicy and thicker than Adana kebab.⁸ Turks survived famines by minimizing the consumption of food. Therefore, in the morning time they consumed only water and bread that would often be dry and stale from being conserved; due to shortages in agricultural harvest. This practice was adopted into Turkish culture and the dish was named Iratchu.

For Turkey, we can say that is a hospitable country and the daily eating in society, announced and unannounced guests, relatives, neighbours, friends and acquaintances. Given that Turkish cuisine is one of the most famous and with these and the best in the world, the impact of culture on preferences of the Turks in the choice of food is an interesting theme about can be written. Although Turkey is a country where people of different cultures live, when it comes to food Turks lot cherish and preserve their traditional cuisine. In almost all regions of Turkey are preparing traditional food typical of this area. So, can be seen very little restaurants that would have to offer food of another culture. Of course the preferences of consumers in Turkey by region are different, and so can be found in Istanbul and try meals peoples of nearly all cultures, like Bosnian, Korean, Japnska, Chinese, etc. So the Turks who live in this area also very glad will try food of other cultures offered almost everywhere. However, there are parts of Turkey in which the influence of culture on food choices of special importance. One of those area is the city of Konya, which is located in central Anatolia. So in Konya in contrast to Istanbul mainly prepares traditional food that is specific only for this area. Although in Konya live a

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_cuisine

⁸ <http://howtoistanbul.com/en/turkish-food-culture-and-cuisine/8926>

very large number of foreigner in restaurants of this city cannot be seen meals from other cultures. Turks who live in this area prefer their traditional food and show very much respect for their culture customs and traditions of cooking. Also Konya is a city where there are many restaurants, especially fast food. Fast food in Turkey is very different from American fast food and prepared food is on Turkish way. Since it is in Konya cannot find restaurants peoples of other cultures, it could be said that this is one of the reasons why people here prefer the more their home cooking and do not accept kitchen people from other cultures. Foreigners who live in Konya and who are members of other cultures and traditions very well accept the food that is much different from the food they eat in their country.

4. Conclusion

However now say with confidence that the eating habits of consumers have changed over time and the impact of culture on consumer behaviour has a smaller impact. So like everywhere both in Turkey and there are people who hold only their culture and traditions, and accordingly they don't want to not changing in their eating habits. Generally speaking, with the weather will be certainly and that minorities wanting to change things taste of something new, different from the usual food that is offered on their traditional menus. Also in communication is one of the main topics of the Turks with people of different cultures is just food. Consequently, it is the beginning of their interest for something different. Although all people have different preferences, Culture should not be a limiting factor in the selection of food, because it is most important that the food that we eat is fine, tasty and health properly and consequently one of the best bridges that will connect people to each other no matter what culture they belong to.

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