

Are We Really Choosing What We Eat?

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Abstract—In this article, I will discuss some relevant issues concerning fast food, and I will demonstrate why we should think twice before buying it. We must consciously choose what to eat, because fast food has a lot of bad fats that are increasing the risk of health problems, as well as increasing ecological problems.

Keywords—fast food; slow food; ecological problems; health problems.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fast food, has a lot of preservatives, and the strongest reason for stopping the consumption of fast food is the environmental problem. The high cost of transporting the frozen fries or meats, which are the basis of the fast food industry. In this article, I will explain some relevant issues concerning fast food, and I will demonstrate why we should think twice before buying it. We must consciously choose what to eat, because fast food has a lot of bad fats that are increasing the risk of health problems, as well as increasing ecological problems.

II. FAST FOOD CONVENIENCE

All began, when the potato became real popular in The United States, and the American soldiers returned from World War I and they demanded the fried potato (Robbins, Hintz and Moore [5]). At this point, it is when french fries were in demand, and the creation of a new experience in dining arrived together with the drive-through, and the fast food restaurant. Thanks to these kind of restaurants, a typical meal in the United States is served in a few minutes.

Ritzer [4], illustrates in his book named, *"The McDonalidization of Society"* about that phenomenon, and where he compares the McDonald's model to globalization. That movement is, "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world" [4], He also demonstrates the efficiency of the model. Why has the McDonald's model proven being so irresistible? Because eating fast food fits our contemporary lifestyles in where people rush from one spot to another, usually by car. This model has three characteristics, that make it a successful business [4]. First is, "Efficiency" because it offers the best way to get almost instant results from being hungry to being satisfied [4]. The next is, "Calculability". We live in a society where we tend to think that bigger is better [4]. We feel that by buying large fries or a triple meat burger we are getting a lot of what appears to be inexpensive. We should remember that the owner, not the customer gets the best deal. Schlosser [7], reveals

that, "In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars" [7]. People also tend to calculate the trip from their homes to the fast food restaurant, be served the food, eat it and return to home and compare it to the time that will take the preparation of the "Slow Food" at home. This meal time, also seems to be faster. The last is, "Predictability" [4]. In where the model assures that products and services will be the same, and obviously offering no surprises about the quality or quantity. Those fundamental reasons and characteristics make it clear that fast food has succeeded for solid reasons.

III. SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

In contrast, the "Slow Food" movement started in the 1980's [5]. Their principles are "Good", in quality and experience, "Clean" in the sense that it should be easy on the environmental footprint, and "Fair", in the sense that it might promote socially just food to local economies. This new movement appeared in Italy through Europe. Robbins says, that the "Slow Food" movement has been welcomed in United Kingdom and in the United States.

IV. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAST FOOD AND SLOW FOOD

The difference between fast food and "Slow Food" thrives in the patience of preparing it. Of course, the time consuming it, but the disturbing fact is the high quantity of calories and fat delivered in one fast food meal. Martindale [3] says, that, "The U.S. Department of Agriculture's recommended daily intake for a normal adult male is 2800 kilocalories and a maximum of 93 grams of fat. A meal at a fast food outlet -burger, fries, drink and dessert- can deliver almost all of those calories in a single sitting" [3]. This movement encourages us to consume local produce instead of fast food, for example, it is better to consume local produce because it helps local markets and promotes businesses. If we buy local, we can help the environment because will not be necessity to transport food. Many other ecological problems are growing because of the predictability results of the fast food industry. For example, the forest is being demolished to produce paper wrappings. There is also, the enormous amount of food needed to feed the cattle [4]. Litter is a huge problem associated with fast food.

Unfortunately, as Robinson, Maya and Lawrence [6] say, "eating just one fast food meal can pack enough calories, sodium, and fat for an entire day or more" [6]. Eating fast food on a regular basis can lead us to different health problems. Still, the fast and

inexpensive temptation can often be hard to resist. I will prove with facts that we need to resist the temptation of consuming fast food. For example, the "Chocolate Coconut Cake Donut" from "Dunkin' Donuts" has 550 calories [2]. In order to burn those calories, men and women will need to jog for almost an hour. Considering that average male burns 105 calories per mile and women 91, while running. That is an average 5 miles and 525 calories per hour, according to "Runner's World" magazine [1].

V. SOCIETY AWARENESS

As well, society is more conscious about eating healthy products. For those concerns Chantal Tode [8] states, "As more U.S. families work to choose healthy foods for their kids, food and beverage marketers are responding with new products and marketing messages that attempt to address these concerns" [8]. We have the responsibility to be well informed about what to eat and to demand healthy options. Fast food restaurants are now offering salads, apples, and milk or reduced sugar items. Also, the growing number of ads inviting kids to engage in physical activity. A change in media advertisement is necessary to achieve our goal of healthy habits.

VI. SLOW FOOD PROBLEMS

A criticism of the, "Slow Food movement" could be that it is a more expensive and more elitist. Who can afford the time and money of Slow Food? Considering that in United States the common worker only has half an hour to eat and it is not economically compensated. Against this position, the solution is simple, to cook simple things at home, like grilled chicken, veggies and to drink plenty of water. The solution is effortless, even better start cooking on weekends and then freeze it. Those simple changes can help improve health and weight. If you do not have time, try to select healthy options such as salads and fruits.

VII. CONCLUSION

Even so, we are turning to home cooked meals, we are more conscious about ecological issues and more demanding about simple pleasures and joys in daily lives. Also, media influence is making us more aware of the risks that are associated to the consumption of fast food, consequences like obesity and heart attacks. Those reasons are pointing in a change of society for the future.

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