Can Supermarkets Boost Healthy Eating Habits?

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ABSTRACT

Problems related to obesity as a result of changing dietary habits have generated discussions. This study aimed to make connections between institutional theory and presumable strategies that supermarkets may adopt to minimize problems related to poor nutrition. Eating habits, obesity and overweight indexes were analyzed, leading to the following problem: How can supermarkets contribute to fight epidemic obesity and at the same time take advantages of it?

INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

According to North (1990) institutions determine the opportunities in the society, while organizations (among which companies are included) are formed to make the most of these opportunities. In the interstice, ideologies are formal and informal rule makers of society and thus play a key role in the development of different economies. Consumers have different buying behaviors, which are influenced by different factors: social, situational, individual (age, gender, social class), environment (where the food is bought and consumed) and market strategies imposed by firms.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the U.S., approximately two thirds of adults and one fifth of children are obese or over weighted (CDC, 2009). In Brazil, obesity has also increased, reaching mostly men with higher incomes (Figure 1).

SUPERMARKETS

Brazil - 75% of total food sales in supermarkets. EUA - 80%. Americans focus consume in packaged foods, while Brazilians consume over 75kg more of fresh products (Table 1).

THE INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY

In this approach, supermarkets that seek to strengthen the organizational identity and the relationship with their costumers need to adequately manage its institutional capital looking for legitimizing their actions.

FINAL REMARKS

Supermarkets could help fighting overweight and obesity problems, and at the same time, take advantages on these actions through the institutional legitimacy that consumers will build regarding the benefits that the supermarkets offer.

REFERENCES


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