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Do Attitudes, Perceptions and Nutrition Information Affect Consumer Purchases of FAFH in Canada?

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Background

- Consumption of food away from home (FAFH) is widely believed to be a contributing factor to the current obesity crisis and other diet related problems in North America.
- In Canada FAFH consumption has been increasing over the years (average annual household spending on food service has increased from \$1152 in 1997 to \$1715 in 2007, while the FAFH share of the household food dollar has increased from 20.5% to 23.5% over the same period- (Statistics Canada 2007). Therefore, there is significant debate about how to improve the quality of foods purchased in FAFH market (provision of nutrition information, proposed fat taxes and advertising restrictions).
- Despite a number of studies that have been undertaken elsewhere (mainly in US -Binkley 2006; Stewart *et al* 2005), consumer attitudes, perceptions and their behaviour with respect to FAFH consumption in Canada are not well understood.

Objective

- To examine how FAFH consumer purchase decisions are affected by attitudes, perceptions and behaviour and socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

Data and Method

Data

- NPD CREST data** ((March 2007- February 2009): restaurants visited, individual meal items purchased, and cost of meal and demographic characteristics of individuals
- Survey data** (August 2009) of 3300 NPD CREST members: attitudes and perception of food quality, awareness and stated use of nutritional information provided by restaurants, and awareness of the content of nutrients in the foods purchased away from home
- Restaurant nutrition information** (year 2008-09) collected by authors

Method

- Two step regression technique to account for the zero censoring nature of the categorical purchases (Heien and Wessell 1990).

First step: probit models for two categories of restaurants- quick service and other service.

Second step: two expenditure share equations for above two categories as a system.

Results

Coefficient estimates for the expenditure share equations system- step 2

Variables	Variable name	Quick Service	Other service
Constant		0.629***	0.371***
Economic and Socio-demographics			
Log total expenditure	TE	-0.004***	0.004***
Household composition (1=with children, 0=without children)	HHC	0.052***	-0.052***
Gender (1=male, 0=female)	G	0.048***	-0.048***
Age	AGE	-0.002***	0.002***
Income	INCOME	-0.003	0.003

Education	EDU	-0.013**	0.013**
Region	RG		
West Coast		-0.050**	0.050**
Prairie provinces		-0.021	0.021
Ontario		0.012	-0.012
Quebec		-0.092***	0.092***
Atlantic provinces			
City size	CS		
Large city		0.007	-0.007
Town		-0.027**	0.027*
Country side			
Attitudes and perceptions			
Health Condition ((poor=1,...excellent=5)	HC	-0.003	0.003
Health condition compared to previous year (poor=1,...excellent=5)	HCPY	-0.001	0.001
Level of trust- persons (yes=1, no=0)	TRUSTP	-0.006	0.006
Level of trust-consumer organizations (1=cannot trust at all,... 5=can be trusted a lot)	TRUSTC O	0.002	-0.002
Level of worry about food services (1=strongly disagree/no worries,... 5= strongly agree/worries)	WFS	-0.003	0.003
Trust in restaurants to deal with food safety (1=strongly disagree/not safe,5= strongly agree/ safe)	CFS	-0.017**	0.017*
Behaviour			
Eating behaviour	EB		
Eat both fish and meat	EB1	-0.014	0.014
Eat fish, not meat	EB2	0.025	-0.025
Eat meat, not fish	EB3	0.037	-0.037
Vegetarian	EB4		
Body mass index	BMI	0.0003	-0.0003
Diet quality index	DQI	0.0003***	-0.0003***
Nutrition Information	NI		
Awareness of availability of nutrition information (yes=1, no=0)		0.031***	-0.031**
Use of nutrition information (yes=1, no=0)		-0.017*	0.017*
R ²		0.576	0.664
DW		2.043	2.001

- A number of economic and socio-demographic characters affect consumers FAFH expenditure.
- Attitudes and perceptions variables do not significantly affect FAFH expenditure, except for the variable used to capture the level of trust in restaurants to deal with food safety.
- Interestingly, the diet quality index (DQI) computed from the actual food intake of FAFH indicates that the better the diet quality the higher the expenditure share on quick service and the lower the expenditure share on other service restaurants.
- Individuals who are aware of the availability of nutrition information in restaurants, have higher expenditure shares for quick service and lower expenditure shares for other service as compared to individuals who are not aware of the availability of nutrition information in restaurants. As compared to individuals who do not use nutrition information in restaurants, individuals who use nutrition information spend less at quick service restaurants and spend more on other service restaurants.
- Overall, this study provides an improved understanding of the behaviour of Canadian FAFH consumers and therefore has implications for health and nutrition policies related to FAFH.

Conclusions

- As compared to economic and socio-demographic factors, selected attitudes and perceptions variables do not appear to have significant effects on FAFH expenditure.
- The provision of nutrition information and the use of nutrition information at restaurants have affected spending on FAFH.