

THE ROLE OF WORK PLACE FACILITIES IN THE SELECTION OF THE MODE OF INSTITUTIONAL CATERING

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ABSTRACT

In our paper we present the sub-results of a 1000-member national survey. Our objective was to establish a model that includes the factors which influence the selection of the mode of institutional catering in point of features of consumers and employers as well. During the validation we emphasized workplace facilities to prove that the features an employer offers can affect the way an individual chooses to eat on weekdays.

Keywords: institutional catering, correlation examination

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of our examination was to synthesise the factors that influence the consumers of institutional catering and to prove that the features employers offer can affect the way an individual chooses to eat on weekdays.

As far as we know, in Hungary complex consumer examinations concentrating on this market have not been carried out so far.

For the establishment of our model we used national and international professional literature. *Table 1* shows the correlation between the model factors and the professional literature.

We also used our preliminary surveys on institutional catering for the establishment of our model. There were four phases in the research carried out in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008. The first three surveys were quantitative ones based on pretested standardised questionnaires. The fourth one was a qualitative research that contained seven focus group interviews.

As a result of the examinations we established our model (*Figure 1*), which concentrates on two sets of variables, one of them contains (embraces) the factors that influence consumers and the other one includes the features of the employers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To prove that this model is valid we applied a 1000-member national survey carried out in 2009. In the case of the national sample planned for 1000 persons, a conscious sample taking was carried out based on the quota. The national adult employees were regarded as the sampling population, so the compounds of the sample are special from the aspect that the older generation above 60 is in a smaller proportion in it than in the total population of the country.

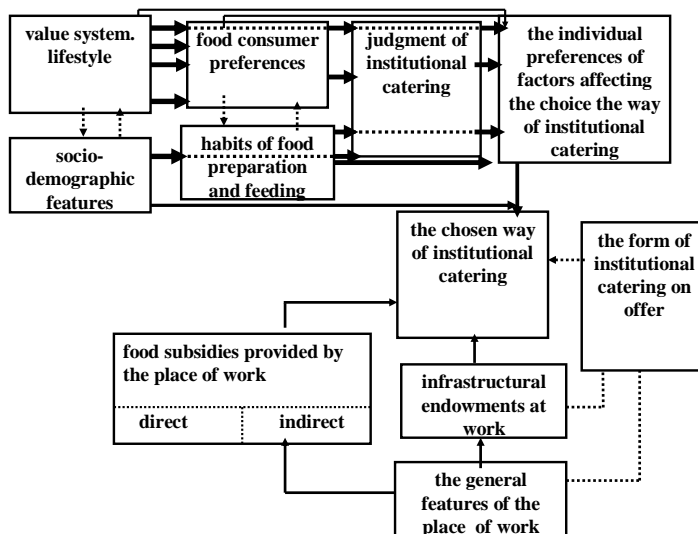
Table 1

Factors and sources of the model

Model factor	Short explanation, justification, description and source
value system lifestyle	The value system based (food) consumer preferences proved the relationship between the consumers' choices of concrete food and the attitude to general human values (<i>Grunert et al., 1996</i>).
socio-demographic features	The characteristic features of customers based on their socio-demographic features (<i>Hayden, 2007; Nayga and Capps, 1994</i>).
food consumer preferences	Food consumer preference as a factor influencing eating outside the household (<i>Blisard and Cromartie, 2001; Naylor et al., 2009</i>).
habits of nutrition	The impact of the attitude toward cooking on eating outside the household (<i>Becker, 1965</i>).
subsidies	Subsidies like luncheon vouchers provided by the place of work (<i>Mikesné, 2004</i>).
circumstances of eating at work and general features of the work place	Eating possibilities and facilities provided by the place of work. The number of employees, the ownership structure of the place of work (<i>Mikesné, 2004</i>).

Figure 1

The research model of the factors affecting the chosen way of institutional catering



The quotas were formed by regions based on the 2007 employment data of the Central Statistical Office (hereinafter referred to as CSO). The proportion of the most important age group (between 18 and 59) of my research in my sample is the same as their share in the sampling population.

Special attention was paid when compiling the questionnaires for the national survey and even in the preliminary research that they should logically fit to the arc of the whole research.

The questionnaire inquired about food consumption, eating habits, value system and demographic items.

The connection between the research model and the standardised questionnaire used for the national survey can be summarised as follows (*Table 2*).

Table 2

The connection between the research model and the standardised questionnaire used for the national survey

Model factor	Short description	
value system lifestyle	Individual ranking of value factors, free time structure	Criteria attached to the consumer
socio-demographic features	gender, age, marital status, income, qualification, residence, type of residence, qualification, marital status, the size of households, the income situation	
food consumer preferences	judgment of the utility factors of food consumption	
habits of nutrition	eating habits, attitude to cooking, the method of getting information on nutrition	
judgment of institutional catering	judgment of institutional catering based on time, comfort and price	
individual preferences of factors affecting the way of institutional catering	judgment of factors affecting the choice of the way of institutional catering	
catering subsidies ensured by the place of work direct subsidies	subsidy built in the price of lunch	Features perceived by the employer consumer
indirect subsidies	subsidy in the form of hot dishes	
Infrastructural endowments at work	possibility of consuming hot meals, premises reserved for consumption	
general features of the place of work	number of employees, ownership background of the place of work	

In our paper we concentrated on sub-results of the national survey mentioned above. First of all, we would like to prove that the facilities of places work can affect the selection of the mode of institutional catering.

RESULTS

The role of subsidies in institutional catering

We would also like to present how the features that can be linked to the employer can affect the way an individual chooses to eat on weekdays.

In the first step of the examination of this nature we analysed whether there was a correlation between the extent of the costs of institutional catering covered by the place of work and the chosen way of institutional catering (*Table 3*).

Table 3

The correlation of the extent of the direct support provided by the place of work and the frequency of making use of institutional catering

The frequency of making use of the canteen	Percentage of the costs of institutional catering covered by the place of work
weekly	45.64
monthly	31.65
never	20.66
total pattern	34.44
The frequency of making use of the restaurant	Percentage of the costs of institutional catering covered by the place of work
weekly	27.65
monthly	28.77
never	40.69
total pattern	34.44
The frequency of making use of the inn	Percentage of the costs of institutional catering covered by the place of work
weekly	22.34
monthly	17.93
never	41.58
total pattern	34.44
The frequency of making use of the fast food restaurant	Percentage of the costs of institutional catering covered by the place of work
weekly	26.57
monthly	26.71
never	37.56
total pattern	34.44

N=997; Levels of measure: proportional scale and nominal; One-Way Anova

A special attention was paid to this question as according to the specialists, subsidies can be an important drive in spreading institutional catering domestically. The results of our own research also proved the significance of subsidies, as during the factor analysis the statements „could be paid by lunch voucher” and „the place of work should cover part of the costs” created a separate factor group as the elements of subsidies covered and did not merge with any of the service elements. The tightest correlation with the extent of the direct subsidy could be detected in the case of the canteen where a great part of the expenses are covered by the workplace in any form so employees are pleased to go to the canteen. The majority of the people make use of the possibility at places where hot meals at a discounted price are available for the employees.

However, the regular guests of the inns, restaurants and fast food restaurants are employees of such workplaces where the direct form of catering subsidies is not the common practice. Those who have meals at the inns, restaurants and fast food restaurants weekly get direct subsidy of a much smaller extent than the average value of the sample. Of course, it does not imply that they only make use of the examined catering facilities because they are not given lunch at a discounted price at their place of work, but the subsidies certainly do affect the frequency of making use of the certain catering facilities.

If the place of work decides on indirect subsidies, i.e. provides its employees with lunch vouchers, it is favourable for the companies dealing with home delivery, buffets and fast food restaurants (*Table 4*). These are the places where the majority of employees can redeem the vouchers. In the case of the canteen, the correlation can also be shown but the difference is not to such an extent as experienced in the case of indirect subsidies.

Other infrastructural endowments that can be linked to the place of work

The use of certain alternatives is differentiated regarding the possibility of consuming a hot lunch provided by the workplace as well as separate premises available for consuming food.

It holds true in the case of the canteen that most of their regular guests work at such places that provide their employees with the possibility of consuming hot lunch on the spot.

According to the results of the research, a significant number of employees would have the possibility to consume a hot lunch on the premises but they prefer going to restaurants or fast food restaurants at lunchtime and do not make use of this service (*Table 5*).

This phenomenon proves the experience gained during our focus group examinations, i.e. there are such employees who search for solutions outside the place of work despite the possibilities and endowments of the workplace.

The same holds true for the regular guests of the buffets. In spite of the fact that they could choose hot meals for lunch at their places of work, they rather look for cold ones that appease their hunger. Both correlations suggest that the individual eating habits and expectations about food are also decisive in the way they consume at work regardless of the possibilities offered by the place of work.

Table 4

The correlation of the extent of the indirect support provided by the place of work and the frequency of making use of institutional catering

The frequency of making use of the canteen	Percentage of costs covered by the workplace in the form of lunch vouchers
	sig=0.001 F=7.33
weekly	39.00
monthly	35.27
never	26.40
total pattern	31.97
The frequency of making use of the buffet	Percentage of costs covered by the workplace in the form of lunch vouchers
	sig=0.029 F=3.58
weekly	37.62
monthly	32.69
never	27.64
total pattern	31.97
The frequency of making use of home delivery	Percentage of costs covered by the workplace in the form of lunch vouchers
	sig.0.003 F=5.92
weekly	46.75
monthly	34.60
never	28.98
total pattern	32.05
The frequency of making use of the fast food restaurant	Percentage of costs covered by the workplace in the form of lunch vouchers
	sig=0.000 F=8.00
weekly	40.63
monthly	30.24
never	27.26
total pattern	32.05

N=997; Levels of measure: proportional scale and nominal; One-Way Anova

The results show that the great bulk of employees who decide on inns would prefer hot meals at work if they had the chance. The same holds true for almost 30% of those requiring home delivery services. These correlations are also significant from a practical point of view as they suggest that most of the users of these alternatives would be open to using the canteen if this chance were offered to them at work.

The analysis showed that facilities at work have a role in determining what way of eating is chosen by the employee but its weight and extent are not the same in the case of the single alternatives. There are ways of eating whose frequency of usage can be tied to the subsidies and facilities (e.g. canteen) on offer provided by the workplace (fast food restaurant, buffet, restaurant) usage possibilities.

Table 5

The connection between the infrastructural endowments of the workplace and the frequency of making use of institutional catering

Criteria linked to workplace	canteen	buffet	restaurant	home delivery	inn	fast food restaurant
Possibility for consuming hot lunch at the place of work	sig=0.000 Adj.R=16.9* 91.3% of the regs have one and use it	sig=0.000 Adj.R=6.5* 68.4%- of the regs have one but do not use it	sig=0.000 Adj.R=10.7* 87.7%- of the regs have one but do not use it	sig=0.000 Adj.R=4.6* 23.2%-of the regs do not have it but would use it	sig=0.000 Adj.R=5.3* 75.2%- of the regs do not have it and would not use it	sig=0.000 Adj.R=4.5* 73.4 of the regs have one but do not use it
Type of workplace	sig=0.003 state, local government 34.2% Adj.R=2.9**	sig=0.034 foreign 33.7%- Adj.R=3.16*	sig=0.000 foreign 32.2% Adj.R=4.5*	sig=0.012 mixed 58.2%- Adj.R=2.4**	sig=0.019 national 32.8%- Adj.R=2.8**	sig=0.000 Adj.R=4.7* 32.5%-of the visitors who never go there are employed by the state or local governments
Number of employees (at those who make use of the given type of catering facility minimum once a week)	sig=0.000 above 250 persons 38.4% Adj.R=4.1*	sig=0.008 above 250 persons 33.2% Adj.R=2.3**				

*Adj.R >= 2: of 95% reliability a positive deviation from the expected level; **Adj.R >= 3 : of 99% reliability a positive deviation from the expected level; N=997 Levels of measure: Chi square trial, values: AdjR=adjusted standardised residuum; %=the ratio of the number of employees at a given place of work who make use of the given catering type at least once a week

The frequency of using the single alternatives can only be defined by the basic features of the workplace. Among the regular guests of buffets and restaurants, the employees of foreign companies (multinationals) with a large staff represent a higher proportion than expected.

Among those who require home delivery on a weekly basis, again the employees of companies of mixed ownership showed a positive deviation from the expected

value, while in the case of inns, the employees of the national companies are dominant. Among the employees of state-or local government-owned workplaces, the number of those who could not be characterised as having lunch in fast food restaurants at all was higher than expected. They are rather regulars guests to canteens. This result justifies the experts' opinion, i.e. that state-and local government-owned companies lead in directly subsidising catering for their employees by running a canteen successfully and providing hot meals at a favourable price.

CONCLUSIONS

During our empirical research we have concluded that making use of institutional catering does not only depend on the criteria linked to the consumer but also on the features of the concrete place of work.

An important part of our examination was to be able to prove that the direct and indirect support provided by the workplace plays a decisive role in the concrete form of institutional catering the employees choose. On the basis of our research results we have pointed out that the canteen was primarily preferred by the employees where the menu is at their disposal at a reduced price (or subsidised by the company). In contrast, support given in the form of luncheon vouchers mainly boosts the turnover of home delivery, fast food restaurants and buffets. These conclusions indicate that the frequency of visiting the different options for eating out is closely connected to what type of eating facilities the workplace can or wants to provide for the employees.

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