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Foodservice Trend Predictions and Implications in 2024

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore how the modern foodservice industry reflects consumers' rapidly changing taste preferences and health consciousness. In particular, it looks at how companies such as Yakult Korea are expanding their business to meet diverse consumer demands and how traditional and exotic tastes are driving the growth of the sauce market. **Research methods:** this study was conducted through market analysis, consumer behavior research and case studies. Sales data, consumer purchasing patterns and product development strategy case studies of sauce products in domestic and global markets were investigated to analyze the impact of taste and health harmony and storytelling on brand value. **Conclusion:** The foodservice industry is meeting consumer expectations for health and taste harmony by developing innovative products that satisfy the senses and adopting marketing strategies through strong storytelling. The success of exotic sauce products in particular reflects consumers' desire for diversity. **Implications:** the findings suggest that the foodservice industry must continue to innovate to meet consumers' health and taste expectations. They also reveal that product storytelling plays an important role in enhancing brand value. This requires a strategic approach to long-term brand growth and market differentiation. Companies need to reflect these changes in consumer buying behavior.

Keywords: Food Preferences, Taste Harmony, Foodservice, Storytelling, Sauce Market.

Major Classification Code: Restaurant Management, Customer Eating-out behavior, Restaurant Marketing, etc.

1. Introduction

The modern food and beverage industry is evolving to keep pace with rapidly changing consumer tastes and technological advancements. Korean yakult, for example, has expanded beyond the traditional dairy market to include health food, HMR, pet beauty, and household products in an attempt to meet the diverse needs of consumers.

Korean flavour preferences are also evident when travelling abroad, with people used to the spicy and salty

flavours of Korea tending to take cup noodles, stir-fried kimchi, and more with them.

This is directly linked to a strong sense of nostalgia for the flavours of home. This is why stronger and spicier flavours are also becoming popular in the domestic food market. Globally, a variety of unique flavours are also emerging, such as fried butter and cookie dough, reflecting consumers' desire for exotic experiences.

The sauce market continues to grow in Korea and abroad. In particular, the sauce market is strong with products such as Paldo Bibimyeon and Samyang Buldak Sauce. These

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products offer consumers a new taste experience with their strong flavour and unique taste. Food with a story, or storytelling, can be more appealing to consumers.

The story behind Lee Kum Kee's oyster sauce or the creation of Kokko noodles are examples of this kind of storytelling, which goes beyond the taste and quality of the product and draws consumers' attention to the story.

Health-conscious consumer preferences are also having a major impact on the foodservice industry. Low-calorie seasonings, vegetable sauces, and probiotic-infused snacks are appealing to consumers who want to combine health and taste. These products are being developed to meet the needs of today's consumers who want to enjoy a delicious meal while maintaining healthy eating habits.

Table 1: Estimated food dining trends for 2024

Section	Content
Modern food-service	Food-service industries evolve with consumer tastes and tech advancements, with companies like Korean Yakult expanding beyond traditional dairy to health foods, ready-to-eat meals, pet beauty, and household goods.
Korean Flavor Preferences Abroad	Korean preference for bold flavors like spicy and salty is evident abroad, where they seek familiar tastes in products like instant noodles and kimchi, reflecting a longing for the taste of home.
Unique Taste Trends Globally	Globally, unique flavors emerge in products like fried butter, pickle juice, and cookie dough, indicating a consumer trend towards exploring novel and diverse taste experiences.
Sauce Market Growth	The sauce market is growing, especially unique sauces like Paldo Bibimjang and Samyang Buldak Sauce, offering strong flavors and new culinary experiences.
Storytelling in Flavor	Storytelling enhances product appeal beyond taste and quality, as seen with the origins of Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce or the creation of Ggoggomyeon, attracting consumer interest through narrative.
Consumer Health Preferences	Health-conscious consumer preferences impact the food-service industry, with products like low-calorie seasonings, vegetable sauces, and probiotic snacks that cater to healthy yet flavorful eating habits.

Source: Korea Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Distribution Corporation (2023)

2. The Importance of Taste

2.1. Korean Consumers' Taste Intensity and the Importance of Korean Food when Travelling Abroad

Korean consumers traditionally have a preference for intense and rich flavours, which is reflected in the spicy and

salty characteristics of Korean food. This preference for flavour intensity is also evident when travelling abroad, where Koreans seem to pack food products that capture the flavours of their home country. The dining experience abroad often fails to satisfy palates accustomed to the intense flavours of Korea, and this appears to create a nostalgia for the 'taste of home' for Koreans abroad. For example, Korean foods such as cup noodles and stir-fried kimchi are popular overseas due to the strong nostalgic factor.

These flavour intensities and nostalgia play an important role in the Korean food service industry. Food products consumed in Korea are developed with these flavour factors in mind, reflecting the expectations and demands of domestic and international consumers.

The importance of Korean food, especially when travelling abroad, is an important factor in strengthening the position of Korean food in the global market, which is leading to an increase in Korean food exports. In this environment, the Korean F&B industry is creating demand for Korean food among global consumers by emphasising the unique flavours of Korean food in overseas markets.

This preference for flavour among Korean consumers has become an important part of the industry's ability to maintain flavour intensity and meet the needs of consumers who are nostalgic for the taste of home. This is increasing the competitiveness of Korean food in both domestic and international markets and plays an important role in spreading the unique flavours and culture of Korean food to the world (Kang & Kang, 2017).

2.2. Modern Consumers' Curiosity and Preference for Exotic Flavours

Consumer taste buds are no longer in a traditional state as curiosity and preference for new and unusual flavors are on the rise. This, coupled with consumers' desire to experience different flavors, is driving the emergence of exotic and unusual products across the food industry.

For example, the phenomenon of selling fried butter separately in the restaurant industry is a good example of this trend. These products are bringing variety to the market by redefining traditional food concepts and offering consumers new textures and flavors.

Consumers are attracted to exotic flavors for several reasons. One is their sense of adventure, wanting to experience something out of the ordinary, and the other is their access to different food cultures around the world through social media. In this context, products that combine flavors from different cultural backgrounds, such as Lee Kum Kee oyster sauce and Paldo bibimbap noodles, are meeting consumer expectations and driving new food trends.

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This quest for flavour is not only linked to the aroma and taste of food, but also to the trend towards healthier lifestyles. New products that combine health and taste, such as low-calorie seasonings and vegetable sauces that provide a day's worth of vegetables, are responding to these consumer demands. It's clear that the foodservice industry is evolving to develop products that go beyond simply delivering flavour and take consumer health into account. Consumer curiosity and preference for exotic flavours that push the boundaries of traditional taste is an important driver of new product development in the foodservice industry. These consumer expectations are pushing the F&B industry to be creative and launch innovative products (Han & Yu, 2003).

3. The Growth of the Global Sourcing Market

The global sauces market is experiencing continued growth amidst a wave of diversity and innovation. Food sauces are more than just a seasoning, they are an important factor in how food tastes. The popularisation of sauces is closely related to the spread of global food culture. The growth of the global sauce market is expected to be more pronounced in major countries such as the United States, China, and Japan.

This global trend is also evident in Korea. The size of the domestic sauce market is expected to grow from approximately KRW 1,370.2 billion to KRW 1,435.5 billion when comparing the forecasts for 2023 and 2024. This means that the domestic sauce market is keeping pace with the growth trend of the global sauce market.

In particular, the growth of the exotic sauce market is prominent, with products such as Paldo Bibimmyeon,

Samyang Buldak Sauce, and Oyster Sauce leading the market with high sales volume.

This growth in sauces is being driven by consumers' desire for food culture and the convergence of global food cultures. Consumers are looking beyond traditional flavours to new and different flavour combinations. Sauce manufacturers are constantly introducing a variety of new sauces to meet these changing consumer expectations.

The versatility to prepare multiple dishes with a single sauce and the need for flavours that are specific to a particular dish are factors that are driving the growth of the sauce market and increasing consumer choice.

In conclusion, the growth of the global sauces market is driven by two pillars: changing consumer taste demands and the spread of global food culture. This emphasises the need for sauce manufacturers to further enhance their competitiveness in the market through innovative product development and marketing strategies. The sauce industry is expected to continue to grow in the coming years (Lee & Mun, 2012).

4. Consumer Flavour Preferences

4.1. Increased Preference for Exotic Sauces (paldo bibimbang, samyang buldak sauce, etc.) over Traditional Flavours (miso, soy sauce, etc.)

Korean consumers' tastes are shifting from traditional to exotic flavours. While traditional sauces such as miso and soy sauce still play an important role, creative products such as paldo bibimbang and samyang buldak sauce are emerging as new favourites among consumers. Exotic sauces are becoming increasingly popular, especially among the younger generation, due to their richness and unique flavours.

The popularity of exotic sauces reflects consumers' desire for variety and to enjoy new experiences in their diets.

Consumers prefer new twists on traditional flavours, which is helping to promote Korean food culture in both domestic and international markets. This trend shows that consumers are seeking new experiences through food beyond mere taste satisfaction, and emphasises the need for the foodservice industry to continue to innovate (Yoon, 2005).

4.2. How the Emphasis on Create-your-own Recipes Correlates with Sauce Market Growth

The data shows that Korean consumers' flavour preferences are closely linked to the development of their own recipes. This indicates that the demand for personalised

food flavours is contributing to the growth of the sauces market. The proliferation of home-cooked meals due to COVID-19 has increased consumer demand for a variety of sauces that allow them to create their own recipes. In response, the foodservice industry is developing a wider range of customisable sauces to meet this demand.

The growth of the exotic sauces market is linked to consumers' desire to customise the flavours of their dishes. The strong sales of products such as Paldo Bibimjang and Samyang Buldak Sauce reflect this consumer demand and demonstrate that consumers prefer experiences that involve them in cooking and demand new flavours. This is key to the continued growth and innovation of the sauce market and reflects the trend of modern food out-of-home culture, which emphasises the importance of consumers' individual tastes (Kim & Kim, 2020).

5. The role of Marketing and Storytelling

5.1. The Importance of Marketing and Storytelling in the Flavour Industry

Marketing and storytelling play a crucial role in the flavour industry. They are key tools to transcend the sale of a product and communicate its intrinsic value and cultural context to consumers. Through storytelling, consumers experience an emotional connection to a product that goes beyond just taste. This approach is particularly effective in the food and flavour industry, where products become more than just consumer goods, but part of a cultural dialogue.

For example, in the Korean food market, Lee Geum Ki oyster sauce is known for its depth of flavour and aroma, Kokko noodles for its unique creation process, and Georgian wine for the story behind its history. Through their stories, these products go beyond mere taste to influence consumer choice, bringing with them a hidden culture and history.

Ultimately, marketing and storytelling are integral to a product's success in the flavour industry. By effectively telling a product's story, consumers have a deeper flavour experience, which contributes to the product's appeal. This strategy plays an important role in imprinting the product in the consumer's memory and encouraging repurchase (Park, 2016).

As a marketing professional, this insight is important for building meaningful connections between products and consumers. Storytelling can be utilised in ways that go beyond simply introducing a product to convey the cultural values and history behind it, and provide an emotional resonance for the consumer. This is especially important in modern consumer culture, where experiential consumption is highly valued.

5.2. The Connection between Stories and Sales for Products like Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce, Kokko Noodles, and Georgian Wine

The power of marketing and storytelling in the food industry is evident in the success of certain products. For example, Lee Kum Kee oyster sauce was created by chance in a humble restaurant in the Guangdong region of China in the late 1800s, and is now recognised worldwide, with daily sales of 1 million bottles. The story of the product's origins and heritage played a crucial role in moving consumers' emotions and driving sales.

Similarly, Kokko noodles were inspired by a famous Korean TV programme, which won a ramen contest and created a new category of noodles called 'white broth'. The product was a huge success, setting consecutive sales records and expanding beyond Korea into international markets.

As you can see, storytelling goes beyond the simple function of a product and serves as a powerful means of creating an emotional bond between the brand and the consumer, making the product more appealing to consumers.

With a long and storied history of almost 8,000 years, Georgian wine is known to be the earliest wine of mankind and is produced using the traditional kvèvri method, which is on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Wines made in this way were also famously tasted by Stalin, and this fascinating backstory has helped Georgian wine gain a global reputation.

This story illustrates the power of a product's story to influence consumer choice, and proves how stories can be linked to product sales. Storytelling goes beyond simply providing information and creates an emotional connection to a product, which plays a key role in getting consumers to choose and return to it. In the food industry in particular, the power of stories can be a decisive marketing tool that can make or break a product's success (Bae et al., 2010).

6. Harmonising Taste and Health

6.1. Health-conscious Modern Consumers' Taste Expectations

Today's consumers are increasingly favouring foods that not only taste good, but also offer health benefits. This is a reflection of consumer expectations that value a balance of taste and health, and the food industry is focusing on product innovation to meet this demand. For example, Seoul Sisters' kimchi seasoning has become a bestseller in the chilli powder section on Amazon and is being recognised as a

health food, rather than just a spice. The product adds the flavour of kimchi to food while satisfying consumers' desire to be healthy.

Other health-focused condiments with strong flavours, vegetable sauces that provide the recommended daily intake of vegetables, and snacks with added probiotics reflect the trend of modern consumers making food choices based on both taste and nutrition. These products are aligned with consumers' health-conscious eating habits, which are becoming some important criteria for food choices. These products meet the needs of consumers who value not only the quality of flavour, but also the impact on their health, and are becoming an important selling point for the foodservice industry.

As such, consumers' taste expectations are no longer limited to satisfying basic taste sensations such as sweet, salty, and spicy, but are evolving to include the health benefits that food should provide. This highlights the need for the food industry to adapt to market changes by developing innovative products that harmoniously combine health and flavour. (Han & Lee, 2018).

6.2. The Emergence of Healthy Food Products such as Low-calorie Seasonings and Vegetable Sauces and Consumer Response

With modern consumers becoming increasingly health conscious, the food industry is seeing the emergence of health-orientated products such as low-calorie seasonings and vegetable sauces. These products aim to contribute to consumers' healthy lifestyles by providing both taste and nutrition. Low-calorie seasonings add flavor while reducing calories, helping consumers achieve their health goals, such as weight control. Vegetable sauces, for example, provide an easy and delicious way to meet your daily vegetable intake.

As health and wellness awareness grows, consumers tend to prioritize healthier options. Food manufacturers are considering nutrition and health as important factors in product development, reflecting these consumer preferences. Especially after COVID-19, demand for foods that promote health while maintaining taste has increased.

The popularity of products such as low-calorie seasonings and vegetable sauces reveals the interplay between consumers' health expectations and the food industry's innovative response. This is interpreted as indicating the development of the food industry in response to the needs of modern consumers who seek to satisfy two important values: taste and health (Yu & Sung, 2020).

7. Harmonizing Flavor and Health: The New Imperative in Foodservice

The synergy of taste and well-being is now a critical trend in the foodservice sector, a reflection of the modern consumer's preferences. This evolution presents the food industry with the dual challenge of developing offerings that are nutritious yet flavorful. Today's consumers prioritize the health attributes of their food, affecting not only how products are developed but also how they are marketed. As health literacy among consumers grows, there is a heightened examination of the nutritional content on labels and the associated health benefits.

Therefore, marketing strategies need to adapt to not only highlight the product but also to address consumers' health concerns and their expectations for taste simultaneously. Marketing efforts should highlight both the flavor profile and the health advantages of a product, which are key considerations for consumers' purchasing choices. Marketing should also leverage storytelling to create an emotional bond with the product, encouraging consumers to see it as a fit for their health-focused lifestyles and values.

In the foodservice industry, the success of a product is increasingly determined by such marketing strategies, especially in times when there is a heightened consumer focus on health and wellness. This demands continuous innovation to fulfill consumer health expectations without compromising on taste quality.

8. Implications

8.1. The Importance of Developing Food Products that Satisfy the Five Senses of Consumers

The first takeaway from this study is the critical importance of crafting food products that appeal to all five of the consumer's senses in the contemporary foodservice market. Today's consumers are seeking culinary experiences that transcend mere taste satisfaction, aiming to engage sight, smell, touch, and hearing as well. This indicates that the act of eating transcends nutritional intake, with consumers placing high value on the complete sensory journey that food can offer, seeking small delights in their everyday routines.

This shift necessitates innovative approaches in food product development that encompass multisensory appeal. For instance, cookie dough appeals to those who are mindful of texture, and probiotic ice cream with popping candy provides a multisensory pleasure. Moreover, potent seasonings or vegetable sauces that provide a full day's nutrition cater to the olfactory and gustatory senses of the health-aware consumer.

Consequently, the food industry must focus more on creating products that consider these sensory dimensions, enabling consumers to enjoy a fuller and more gratifying experience through all their senses. This implies that

addressing the various sensory demands of consumers is a pivotal component in a product's success and can serve as a fundamental strategy in differentiating product development and marketing within the foodservice sector.

8.2. The Potential for Storytelling to Enhance Brand Value

The second insight from this study highlights the potent role of storytelling in augmenting a brand's value. Contemporary consumers are shifting their focus from just the features of a product to the narratives and experiences that those products represent. This means that in the decision-making process, consumers weigh not only the tangible qualities or cost but also the emotional resonance and the messages embodied by the product.

The triumphant narratives of brands like Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce, Kokko Noodles, and Georgian Wine showcase the ability of storytelling to bolster brand equity. Whether it is the origins of the rich flavors of Lee Kum Kee Oyster Sauce, the inventive journey of Kokko Noodles, or the storied heritage of Georgian wine, these narratives forge an emotive bond with customers, which becomes pivotal in their purchasing decisions. A narrative that aligns with the consumer's values can foster enhanced brand loyalty and recognition.

Hence, employing storytelling actively within the food and beverage sector is imperative, not merely for boosting immediate sales but for elevating a brand's enduring value. When consumers identify with a brand's story and see its relevance to their own lives, the brand gains a more integral place in their daily experience. This opens avenues for sustained growth and distinct positioning in the competitive market.

9. Limitations and Future Research Directions

One limitation identified in this study is that the existing research and understanding of current trends in the foodservice industry may not adequately capture the swiftly evolving market and shifting consumer preferences. Industry research often concentrates on mapping present consumer behaviors and expectations, yet these expectations are in constant flux, necessitating up-to-date data and analysis for accurate responsiveness. Moreover, the advent of new technologies, escalating global competition, and the escalating imperative for sustainable practices present fresh hurdles for the food and beverage sector.

To address these research gaps, future explorations should pivot toward creating sustainable and cutting-edge products, grounded in a comprehensive grasp of consumer behaviors. This could be accomplished by analyzing real-time market data, projecting future consumer tendencies,

and consistently examining international market movements. There is also a call for research into food product innovation that meets both the health and flavor demands of consumers while reducing environmental footprints.

Furthermore, it is vital to investigate sustainable food production techniques across various sectors and to forge innovative marketing approaches to amplify brand value. Techniques like narrative marketing, leveraging social media, and offering tailored food experiences can fortify the connection between brands and their patrons, fostering greater brand allegiance. Pursuing such research avenues will equip the industry to meet impending challenges adeptly and persist in delivering value to consumers.

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