Guest editorial

Food anti-consumption and consumer well-being

There is a massive interest among scholars examining consumer well-being and anti-consumption behaviours, a movement concerning macro-aspects of organisation and society (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2013). Anti-consumption refers to examination and identification of reasons against consumption with a view that individuals, businesses and society must realise their own and each other’s roles to safeguard human welfare. The relevant themes under this area of investigation are boycotting, activism, cultural jamming, undesired self and brand avoidance.

The anti-consumption centres on the idea that consumers need to be selective while making consumption choices. In this regards, what and when to consume is important but what not to consume something that is more important. Another aspect of anti-consumption is to provide businesses and society an edge through conscious and wise consumption practice. The research has shown some positive results where careful consumption brings positivity among consumers (Lee et al., 2009). However, given an increase in the capitalist orientation followed by governments and the business organisations where consumer (societal) concerns are sacrificed to achieve corporate objectives, anti-consumption seems a consequence that is an imperative to happen. The rising interest of businesses in societal well-being is usually attributed to organisations facing challenges such as consumer power and rising concerns about the limited role (macro, broader in nature) of businesses to contribute to society (Grönroos, 1997; Figueiredo et al., 2015). Consumer well-being is imperative for businesses to grow and earn financial and non-financial returns. There are studies published where consumer welfare has been studied to link it to food, but the macro-perspective of consumer well-being is ignored by large (Goetzke et al., 2014; Devezer et al., 2014).

The achievement of consumer welfare through food (anti)consumption is an interesting discourse to advance knowledge while examining consumers’ food-related behaviours. There are various reasons to it. One aspect of food consumption is that it causes obesity among its users due to the fact that they get addicted to specific types of food (Curtis and Davis, 2014). However, interestingly, how consumers become addicted with special types of food can be an interesting avenue of research. This is especially true in cases where food is marketed to different age groups such as Children (Opree et al., 2014) and older people. Another perspective is intentional non-consumption behaviours that are scarcely studied (Cherrier et al., 2011). This can also include anti-consumption practices such as rituals of Fasting among Muslims and prohibition of eating beef among Hindu communities. These are interesting issues to examine their link with societal welfare. The anti-consumption is a reality in third world countries where a large majority of population has limited access to (quality) food while a fair amount of food is branded (Kashif et al., 2015) – a common man cannot afford to buy it. Finally, consumer welfare in food is an interesting phenomenon as food wastage while consumption is a barrier harnessing societal well-being and welfare, yet scarcely investigated (Block et al., 2016).

There are 14 papers included in this special issue. First paper, “Exploring inside the box: a cross cultural examination of stimuli affecting fast food addiction”, authored by Hania and colleagues is a cross-cultural study and highlights the role of personal, social and demographic factors affecting food addiction. The authors used a mixed-methods research design and found that craving and impulsiveness cause food addiction while mood, obesity concerns and few cultural elements trigger general consumption behaviour. The study of food addiction through a cognitive affective behaviour framework is a unique contribution of this study.
Second paper, “Social media analysis of anti-consumption in Turkey”, authored by Khan and colleagues aims to examine the consumer perceptions of food anti-consumption in a cultural context of Turkey. These researchers content analysed various social media platforms and found that consumers’ negative past experience dominantly drives their anti-consumption behaviour. The identification of some new motives to food anti-consumption is a unique contribution of this study.

Third paper, “Factors influencing Turkish parents’ intentions towards anti-consumption of junk food”, authored by Yarimoglu and colleagues is aimed at investigating the role of attitude, norms and behavioural control to determine junk food anti-consumption among children in a Turkish context. The results of survey highlight important role of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control to predict the anti-consumption of junk food. The addition of regret as an emotion to study with theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the context of junk food are original products of this study.

Fourth paper, “Eating habits of polish university students depending on the direction of studies and gender”, authored by Tarnowska and colleague aims to examine the binge eating habits of university students, intersecting the findings based on gender. With data collected from a large group of university students in Poland, an interesting finding revealed that women eat a highly nutritious food, once compared to their male counterparts. The examination of food anti-consumption in an important cultural context of Poland is unique to this study.

Fifth paper, “The impact of self-congruity (symbolic and functional) on brand hate: a study based on self-congruity theory”, authored by Tahir and colleagues investigates the impact of symbolic and functional incongruity to study brand hate, supported empirically to test the hypotheses. The brand based consumer incongruity to link it to brand hate is a unique contribution. Another paper, “Farmer behavior and perception regarding food waste and unsold food”, authored by Alessandro and colleagues aims to study the farmers’ attitude towards food waste behaviour. With data collected from 35 farmers, serious deficiencies are found in their knowledge about food waste management. The study is original contribution to gain a deeper understanding of farmer behaviours concerning food wastage in this context.

Seventh paper, “Consumers’ anti-consumption behaviour toward organic food purchase: an analysis using SEM”, authored by Mohammad Ali and colleagues highlights the role of TPB-based antecedents of organic food consumption. The data are collected from 337 consumers and findings indicate a stronger role of self-efficacy, trustworthiness, attitude and the subjective norms. The context of study (i.e. a suburban area) and unique combination of diverse variables to put under a TPB-based framework are unique to this study. The paper, “Is Anti-consumption Driving Meat Consumption Changes in Australia?” authored by Malek and colleagues aims to determine the factors which can increase or decrease the meat consumption in Australia. The factors such as price and personal health, age and household income, personal and social benefits gained, and food production were associated with a decreased consumption of food. The study is unique in the context of Australia while using an anti-consumption lens.

The ninth paper, “Organic Shoppers’ involvement in organic foods: self and identity”, authored by Yun-Hee and colleagues aims to understand consumer identity issues related to organic food satisfaction and the resultant word of mouth. With data collected from 512 consumers, the results demonstrate strong support for health and environment issues as pivotal to trigger organic food consumption. The positioning of unique antecedents to predict organic food consumption is unique to this study. Another paper, “Preaching to the middle of the road: strategic differences in persuasive appeals for meat anti-consumption”, authored by Catherine and colleagues explores the strategic differences in marketing communication tactics used by vegan and humane brands. The authors used a content analysis approach and
categorised various advertising appeals used by these brands. Both these brands use a wide range of advertising themes. The unique method of analysis and the advertisements of brands make it another meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

The paper, “Brand hate: the case of Starbucks in France”, authored by Glyn and colleagues aims to explore the antecedents and consequences of negative affect in the food sector. By employing a mixed-method design, data were collected from 324 business school students. The findings signify an important role of brand hate to trigger extreme brand hate towards Starbucks brand. The discussion of brand hate in the context of a global food brand is unique to this study. Another paper, “Nutritional traffic light and self-regulatory consumption: the role of emotions”, authored by Isabel and colleagues investigated the impact of nutritional traffic lights to reduce consumers’ intention of unhealthy food consumption. With data collected from 330 people, findings reveal that traffic light colours such as red, yellow and green significantly influence consumers’ level of fear and guilt. The use of traffic lights in a combination of consumer emotions of fear and guilt are unique to this study.

The paper, “The role of religious motivation in an international consumer boycott”, authored by Nazlida and colleagues tests the role of intrinsic religious motivation to boycott US-based brands. With data collected from 325 consumers, findings support the proposed hypotheses. The role of religion to examine different types of consumer boycotts towards food brands is unique to this study. Finally, the paper, “Model construction of engagement and outcomes in consumers food life: evidence from chain stores customer”, authored by Saman and colleagues signifies the role of consumer lifestyles and personality to examine their satisfaction and loyalty. The data collected from 384 consumers support the hypothetical relationships. The study is unique as the framework is a combination of personality- and lifestyle-based variables.

Muhammad Kashif
Faculty of Management, GIFT University, Gujranwala, Pakistan

References


Further reading