The food concerns of urban consumers

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Outline

• Background – public health importance

• Types of concerns about food

• International food concerns

• Conclusions
Background

• Metabolic disease epidemic.

• Risk perceptions – predictive of behaviour, familiarity, dread, control.

• Food concerns - mainly safety but there are others – credence values see logos on food labels.

• Supermarket expansion – safety & credence logos

• Fear and insecurity,
  – Furedi – Anglo-America – helpless humans
Concern Themes

- **Safety** – purity and contamination
- **Health & Nutrition** – types of foods, negative nutrients
- **Care for others** – people, animal welfare
- **Environment** – planet
- **Basics** - prices, honesty of labels
- **Most studies:**
  - About food safety, other themes excluded, except Hohl & Gaskell 2008,
  - Cross-sectional
  - Not well studied: antecedents, roles in behaviour, international differences.
International food concerns

Aims:

• Examine a broad range of concerns.
• Examine likely influence of concerns on:
  – support for food policies
  – avoidance of energy dense, nutrient poor (EDNP) foods
  – environmental purchasing intentions
• Examine likely predictors, age, sex, education, universalist values, powerlessness, control over food
Survey 2012

Method:
• On line survey of 1000 adults in UK, USA, France Shanghai and Australia (2000).
• 20 minute questionnaire, 50 concern items
• Mainly closed 5 point ratings of concerns (Not concerned to Very concerned); control, policy support and purchasing intentions; open ended questions

Analyses:
• Confirmatory factor analysis,
• Linear regression of factor scores by predictors,
• Structural equation modelling;
• Leximancer content analyses of open ended questions.
Measured predictor variables

**Nutrition & Health** Foods high in salt, fat, sugar, calories; additives, processed foods, food allergies, types of fats.

**Environment** Food wasted during production, waste of food by consumers, building on farm land, sewerage from animal production, depletion of ocean fish stocks, acidification of oceans, greenhouse gas emissions.

**Animal Welfare** Animal cruelty, slaughtering animals, transport of animals, caged egg production.

**Safety** Foodborne illnesses, poor storage of food, microbiological contamination, pesticide residues, hormone residues, clean handling of food, chemical food additives, routine use of animal antibiotics, imported foods.

**Control (Self efficacy)** Nutrition status, health status, environmental issues, treatment of animals, food system, safety of the food, avoid food produced with new technologies, types of food you buy.

**Support for Policies** Support small-scale farmers, avoid cheap labour, discourage foreign ownership, clear country of origin labelling.
Outcome variables

Support for policy
Support small-scale farmers, avoid cheap labour, prevent foreign ownership, provide clear country of origin labelling

Avoid purchasing of Energy Dense Nutrient Poor foods
Buy food low in sugar, salt or fat

Environmental food purchasing intentions
Purchase certified environmentally-friendly food products; buy certified 'organic' or authenticated food products’ buy free range eggs
Results

Several highly reliable scales were constructed (CFA)

Nutrition concerns
Environmental concerns
Animal welfare concerns
Safety concerns
Control over food (self efficacy)
Support for environmental food policies
Avoidance of Energy Dense Nutrient Poor foods
Environmental purchasing intentions
How do the 5 countries rate?
Safety concerns

- USA
- UK
- France
- Shanghai
- Australia
Environmental concerns

- USA: 3.50
- UK: 3.60
- France: 3.30
- Shanghai: 3.70
- Australia: 3.60

(mean scores)
Animal welfare concerns

- USA
- UK
- France
- Shanghai
- Australia

Mean score vs. Location
Self-efficacy

- USA
- UK
- France
- Shanghai
- Australia

mean score

- Australia
- USA
- UK
- France
- Shanghai
SEM: UK & Ireland

Control

Nutrients concerns
- processed foods
- type of fats
- Foods high in calories
- Foods high in sugar
- Foods high in fat
- Foods high in salt

Environmental concerns
- Food wasted during production
- farm land for housing
- Sewerage of animal production
- Depletion of ocean fish stocks
- Acidification
- Waste of food by consumers

Safety concerns
- Pesticide residues in food
- Microbiological contamination
- use of animal antibiotics
- Hormone residues

Animal welfare concerns
- Transport of animals
- Caged egg production
- Animals cruelty
- employ cheap labour

Support policy

Food system
- animals
- environment
SEM: Shanghai

![SEM Diagram]

- Self-efficacy
- Nutrients concerns
  - type of fats
  - Foods high in calories
  - Foods high in sugar
  - Foods high in fat
  - Foods high in salt
- Environmental concerns
  - Food wasted during production
  - Farm land for housing
  - Sewerage of animal production
  - Depletion of ocean fish stocks
  - Acidification
  - Green house gas emissions
- Support policy
  - Small-scale farmers
  - Foreign ownership
- Animal welfare concerns
  - Slaughtering of livestock
  - Transport of animals
  - Caged egg production
- China
  - Food system
  - Animals
  - Environment
SEM: prediction of food purchasing intentions (Australia)
Conclusions

Consumers hold several major concerns about food in addition to safety concerns.

Food concerns influence purchasing intentions and policy support. Do they influence food intake & health status?

Concerns influence support for policy & EDNP food avoidance differently between countries – needs further examination;

Need longitudinal studies to establish influences on concerns & food consumption behaviours;

Monitoring of changes in concerns and their influences.
Thank you!

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