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The Impact of Healthy-pleasure Product Choice Attribute Importance on Buyer Attitudes and Purchase Behavior: a Focus on low-calorie Foods*

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to investigate consumer attitudes towards healthy foods, focusing on low-calorie options, and their impact on purchasing behavior. **Methods:** The study utilizes structural equation modeling, which incorporates statistical tools such as SPSS and AMOS for thorough analysis. This involves collecting data over a period of time and then inferring patterns and relationships through correlation and trend analysis. **Results:** The study found that attributes such as quality, price, functional value, and emotional value have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions, but not on nutrition and brand. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence consumer attitudes and purchase behavior toward healthy indulgences in the context of low-calorie foods, and has important implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. **Conclusions and Implications:** This study provides new insights into consumer behavior theory by validating the impact of the perceived value of low-calorie products on attitudes and purchase behavior, which is of great academic value. It is also expected to provide useful information for the formulation of effective marketing strategies for low-calorie products and the development of products that meet consumer needs.

Keywords: Healthy pleasure, Low-calorie foods, Zero calorie foods

JEL Classification Code : I11, I12, M30, M31

1. Introduction

With more people staying at home during COVID-19, weight management has become an increasingly important concern. Many diets have been introduced and tried, but many people have failed because they are considered hard

and unbearable with strict dieting and exercise. However, in recent years, the concept of Healthy Pleasure, which does not give up enjoyment even when dieting, has been rapidly emerging, especially among the 2030 generation (Park, 2023). Healthy Pleasure, which is a combination of health and pleasure, literally means the pleasure of health

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care. Unlike forced dieting or exercise, it's about enjoying and consistently practicing health as much as possible in a stress-free way (Ahn, 2023). The zero-sugar craze, which has been prominent in the beverage market, is spreading across the food industry. According to global market research firm Euromonitor, the domestic low-sugar market is estimated to have exceeded 300 billion won last year, compared to 90.3 billion won in 2016. In response, the food industry is actively reflecting the needs of consumers and introducing various low-sugar and low-calorie products, such as meal kits, beverages, and snacks, to target consumers' tastes. (Lee, 2023) Lotte Chilsung Beverage (hereinafter referred to as Lotte Chilsung) plans to launch beverage products this year. The company currently sells two low-calorie beverages on the market, including Chilsung Cider Zero and PepsiCola Zero. The company plans to introduce three more zero-calorie beverage products in the first half of this year, bringing its total lineup to five. Even in the ice cream industry, which is synonymous with high calories, there has been a recent influx of low-calorie products. Baskin-Robbins, for example, launched three products in its 'Delight' line in March last year that dramatically lowered calories compared to existing products. (Kim, 2022) LG Life Health's Monster Energy Zero Sugar and Red Bull Sugar Free, imported and sold by Dongseo Beverage, are also competing. The same is true for sweets. Lotte Confectionery 24 ealth 24 cing Petit Monchelle Zero Cacao, which uses alternative sweeteners instead of sugar, and then launched ZERO, a sugar-free dessert brand. Diet bakery brand Upside Down Sugar continues to grow sales through its flour and sugar-free diet bakery products. (Ahn, 2023).

In addition, the alternative sweetener market is growing very fast, and the growth rate of high and low-calorie sweeteners is very high compared to the growth rate of high fructose. The low-sweetness sweetener market, which has a higher CAGR than other product categories, is expected to grow by approximately 6.2% annually through 2019. This shows that, in line with the trend toward sugar reduction (calorie reduction), the use of low-sweetness sweeteners is increasing to control the properties and flavor of various processed foods, from the existing simple high-sweetener-centered zero-calorie beverage products to various processed foods (Kim et al., 2016) and the relationship between consumer perceived value and purchase intention, purchase behavior, and repurchase intention (Yang & Kim, 2018). Recognizing the lack of domestic and international research on the fast-growing 24 ealth pleasure market, this study aims to empirically analyze the factors that lead consumers to purchase low-calorie foods in the context of the lack of understanding of healthy pleasure consumption value.

This study aims to provide basic data that can help marketers recognize healthy food trends, understand consumers' purchasing behavior, and develop marketing plans that can encourage consumers to make repeat purchases rather than one-time purchases.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Taste

Kim et al. (2008) found that the taste of food, food price, wellness menu, hygiene, etc. have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction is also very closely related to revisit intention. Namkung and Jang (2007) investigated the effect of food quality on customer satisfaction and behavioral intention and found that the overall food quality affects customer satisfaction and behavioral intention, and the relationship between food quality and customer behavioral intention is mediated by satisfaction. Baker and Crompton's (2000) study on food quality, satisfaction, and consumer intentions found that the higher the quality of food, the higher the satisfaction, and this plays a large role in customers' choice of restaurants. The above studies on food flavor and satisfaction suggest that food flavor affects satisfaction.

H1: Taste has a positive effect on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.2. Nutrition

The dictionary definition of health is the state of being mentally and physically fit and strong; it also refers to the state of being able to prevent disease, which includes balanced nutrition, as well as any disease that may result from nutritional imbalances (Kim et al., 2010). Health-consciousness refers to the degree to which a person is concerned about his or her own health and strives to maintain or improve his or her own health status as well as the quality and standard of living (Newsom et al., 2005). When asked if nutritional information on restaurant menus would influence their menu choices, 90.6% of consumers said it would (Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, 2011). Except for consumer attitudes toward the nutrition labeling system, motivation to use and health interest were found to have a significant causal relationship with satisfaction (Lee, 2017).

H2: Nutrition has a positive effect on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.3. Price

In Kim (2015), 'price satisfaction' showed a significant difference depending on income. The mean value was highest for the group with an income of more than 4 million won. Post hoc tests showed that the group with an income of more than 4 million won per month was more satisfied than the group with an income of less than 300-400 million won. 'Satisfaction with food taste', 'satisfaction with food quality', and 'satisfaction with nutrition' were all found to be significantly different by income, and post hoc tests showed that the group with an income of more than 4 million won per month perceived 'satisfaction with food taste', 'satisfaction with food quality', and 'satisfaction with nutrition' to be higher than the group with an income of less than 3 million won per month. 'Satisfaction with overall convenience store experience' was found to be significantly different by income, and post hoc tests showed no difference. This suggests that the higher the income level, the less burdened they are by the price of convenience foods, so they are more satisfied with the price, and the taste, quality, and nutrition of convenience foods eaten occasionally are considered as a separate food. In a study by Song (2009), in an analysis of the purchase selection attributes and usage behavior of home meal replacement food customers, the selection attributes were divided into appropriate price, taste, freshness of ingredients, brand of the manufacturing company, convenience of use, accessibility of the place of purchase, hygiene, and variety of menu. As the interest in menu development and food safety is increasing, it is necessary to improve hygiene to make prices more competitive.

H3 : Price has a positive impact on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.4. Brands

Yang et al. (2015) found that satisfaction with the quality, price, design, and safety of eco-friendly organic food brands had a positive influence on all variables through analysis of variance to test the degree of relatedness and directionality between the variables. In conclusion, the results showed that consumers' satisfaction with eco-friendly organic food brands has an impact on both purchase and continuous repurchase. In Chilbinbin (2020), the positive effect of brand factors and design factors on quality evaluation can be explained as a reflection of customers' high expectations. In other words, customers are more likely to perceive a brand to be of good quality if it is a well-known brand or a brand with a high level of recognition, and they also perceive that a product with

perfect packaging and stylish design will always be of high quality.

H 4: Brand trust has a positive effect on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.5. Functional Value

Kang et al. (2019) reported that among the sub-variables of HMR convenience store bento box selection attributes, taste, uniqueness, and harmony of bento box were verified to have a significant positive effect on functional value. Consumption refers to the purchase and use of necessary goods, and functional value is the utility perceived by consumers for practical functions related to product quality or function, price, and service.

H5: Functional value has a positive effect on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.6. Emotional Value

Yoon (2023) defined emotional value as the value that consumers feel as a positive or negative emotion of a product when choosing a product, and composed a questionnaire to measure a special feeling or emotional state compared to other products. In a study by Kang and Kang (2017), intrinsic value, such as taste and quality, and economic value, such as utility, and emotional value, such as satisfaction and happiness through purchase and consumption, were positively related to purchase intention to trigger purchase behavior.

H6: Emotional value has a positive effect on satisfaction with low-calorie foods.

2.7. Satisfaction and Repurchase

According to Oliver (1980), satisfaction increases when the experience is higher than expected, and dissatisfaction occurs when the experience is lower than expected. Jeong et al. (2022) found that customer satisfaction as a selection attribute of care food HMR has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention. Repurchase intention is a purchase intention that is determined while purchasing goods and services, and it is said to be a continuous behavior and attitude. In addition, it was suggested that repurchase intention is the intention to continue the current transaction relationship between the seller and the consumer (Yoon, 2019). Shin et al. (2023) showed that when consumers were satisfied with coffee shop MD products, it positively influenced repurchase intention. This suggests that satisfaction with MD products has a

significant impact on repurchase intention. In addition, previous researchers have proven that purchase satisfaction of HMR products has a significant effect on repurchase intention (Cha & Seo, 2019). Repurchase intention is highly related to actual purchase behavior as it has a strong tendency to be a behavior that consists of actual consumption. Repurchase intention is considered to be an important factor in customer management in service companies. (Jang & Kim 2023).

H7: Satisfaction has a positive impact on repurchase.

3. Research Method

This is an exploratory study that examines consumer attitudes toward healthy foods, with a focus on low-calorie foods, and their impact on purchase behavior. The study is descriptive in nature and uses structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationship between several variables. This study primarily uses a survey method of data collection. The target population is limited to adults between the ages of 20-60 years old living in the country. Questionnaires were distributed online and offline to collect information on consumer attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. To measure the study variables, taste, health, price, brand, functional value, emotional value, satisfaction, and repurchase intention were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 very satisfied to 7 very dissatisfied). The data collected was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. After initial data processing, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the measured variables. A structural equation model (SEM) was then constructed and hypotheses were tested using path analysis. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the importance of healthy-pleasure product selection attributes on buyer attitudes and purchase behavior, with a focus on low-calorie foods. The survey for this study was conducted online for 21 days from February 19, 2024 to March 11, 2024. A total of 315 questionnaires were collected as a sample, and 315 questionnaires were used as the final research sample. The study was conducted among consumers who purchased low-calorie food products, and the general characteristics of the respondents were analyzed as follows. The gender of the sample was 86 males (27%) and 229 females (73%). By age, 7 (2.2%) were teens (~19 years old), 240 (76.2%) were in their 20s (20-29 years old), 46 (14.6%) were in their 30s (30-39 years old), 9 (2.9%) were in their 40s (40-49 years old), 10 (3.2%) were in their 50s (50-59 years old), and 3 (1%) were in their 60s (60+ years old). The frequency of purchasing and using low-calorie foods was 115 (36.5%) once a week or less, 176 (55.9%) 2-5 times a week, 18

(5.7%) 6-9 times a week, and 6 (1.9%) 10 or more times a week. In terms of respondents' occupation, 224 (71.1%) were students, 62 (19.7%) were employed, 19 (6%) were professionals, and 9 (2.8%) were not employed. In addition, the average amount of money spent on low-calorie food was less than 50,000 won per month for 218 respondents (69.2%), between 50,000 won and 100,000 won for 71 respondents (22.5%), between 100,000 won and 200,000 won for 20 respondents (6.3%), and more than 200,000 won for 6 respondents (1.9%).

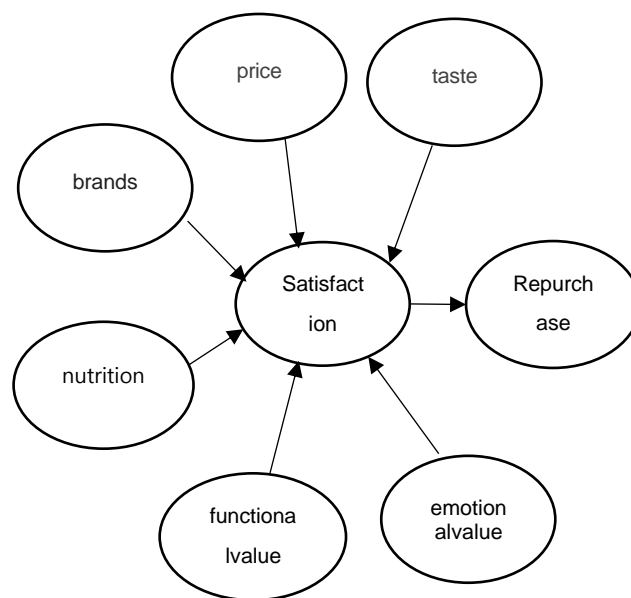


Figure 1: Research models

4. Result of the Study

Composite reliability (CR) is considered consistent if it is greater than or equal to 0.7. In Table1, among the factors in this study, quality, health, affordability, fashion, satisfaction, and repurchase have CR values above 0.7. However, the CR value of convenience is 0.60805, which is lower than 0.7, so it cannot be considered consistent. The average variance extracted (AVE) is considered reliable if it is greater than 0.5. Among the factors in this study, the AVE values of taste, price, brand, nutrition, functional value, and emotional value are all greater than 0.5; therefore, they can be considered reliable.

Table1: Confirmatory factor analysis

Variables	Measure	Standardized Regression Coefficient	CR	AVE
Taste	Taste1	0.781	0.896	0.682
	Taste2	0.851		

	Taste3	0.872		
	Taste4	0.797		
Price	Price1	0.892	0.902	0.699
	Price2	0.907		
	Price3	0.731		
	Price4	0.802		
Brand	Brand3	0.525	0.709	0.567
	Brand4	0.927		
Nutrition	Nutrition1	0.683	0.869	0.692
	Nutrition2	0.862		
	Nutrition3	0.931		
Functionalvalue	Functionalvalue1	0.751	0.799	0.570
	Functionalvalue3	0.746		
	Functionalvalue4	0.768		
Emotionalvalue	Emotionalvalue1	0.707	0.814	0.524
	Emotionalvalue2	0.635		
	Emotionalvalue3	0.822		
	Emotionalvalue4	0.720		
Satisfactions	Satisfactions1	0.909	0.902	0.698
	Satisfactions2	0.842		
	Satisfactions3	0.775		
	Satisfactions4	0.811		
Repurchase	Repurchase3	0.646	0.788	0.658
	Repurchase4	0.948		

Chi-square= 617.433 (p=0.000, df= 271), IFI=0.910, CFI=0.908, RMSEA=0.069

Discriminant validity is the degree of discrimination between latent factors. If the correlation between two factors is low, the discriminant validity value is high. To secure discriminant validity, it is said that discriminant validity is secured by comparing the square value of the correlation coefficient and the mean variance extracted value and confirming that the mean variance extracted value is greater than the square value of the correlation coefficient (Hair et al., 2014). In Table 2, discriminant validity was secured in this study by meeting the criteria.

Table2: Discriminant Validity through Correlation Analysis

	repurchase	price	taste	brand	nutrition	functionalvalue	emotionalvalue	satisfaction
repurchase	0.811							
price	0.264	0.836						
taste	0.444	0.505	0.826					
brand	0.183	0.294	0.279	0.753				

nutrition	0.345	0.105	0.165	0.291	0.832			
functionalvalue	0.507	0.537	0.638	0.283	0.155	0.755		
emotionalvalue	0.582	0.135	0.288	0.173	0.440	0.365	0.724	
satisfaction	0.804	0.485	0.658	0.236	0.327	0.687	0.601	0.836

This study aims to empirically analyze the psychological factors that may lead to the purchase of low-calorie products due to the healthy pleasure trend, and to propose a logical theory that can lead consumers to make continuous purchases rather than one-time impulse purchases.

In this study, a combination of literature and empirical research was conducted. For the literature study, domestic and foreign professional books, research papers, journals, reports, and statistical data were utilized to examine recent trends in low-calorie consumption and repurchase intentions, and based on the literature study and empirical research, a research model suitable for this study was designed and hypotheses were set. For the empirical analysis, the questionnaire consisted of 37 questions, including 4 questions each on taste, price, brand, nutrition, emotional value, and functional value, 4 questions on satisfaction with low-calorie products, 4 questions on repurchase, and 5 questions on demographic characteristics. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the AMOS statistical program. Table 3 below shows the analysis results.

Table3: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Paths	Path Coefficient	t value	p value	Results
H1	Taste ->Satisfaction	0.295	4.371	***	Accept
H2	Price ->Satisfaction	0.101	2.028	.043*	Accept
H3	Brand ->Satisfaction	-0.052	-0.847	.397	Reject
H4	Nutrition ->Satisfaction	0.046	0.853	.394	Reject
H5	Functionalvalue ->Satisfaction	0.450	3.505	***	Accept
H6	Emotionalvalue	0.390	6.011	***	Accept

	->Repurchase				
H7	Satisfaction ->Repurchase	1.001	15.000	***	Accept

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

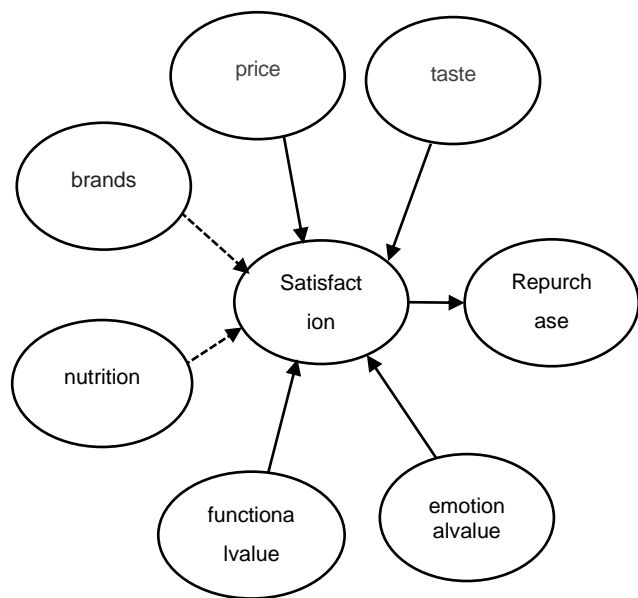


Figure 2: Result of the Research

5. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the results of this study, the following implications can be drawn. Taste, price, brand, nutrition, emotional value, and functional value were presented as attribute factors for low-calorie foods, and the impact of these factors on satisfaction and repurchase was investigated. As a result, taste, price, functional value, and emotional value were found to have a significant effect on consumers repurchase, while brand and nutrition did not have a significant effect on consumers repurchase.

The theoretical implications of the results of this study are as follows. In this study, the selection attributes of low-calorie foods were defined as taste, price, brand, nutrition, emotional value, and functional value through the trend called healthy pleasure, and the impact on purchase satisfaction of low-calorie foods was identified. Research results show that taste, price, functional value, and emotional value have a significant impact on satisfaction with purchasing low-calorie foods. People are satisfied with the trend of healthy pleasure, not because they check the brand and purchase low-calorie foods for nutritional reasons, but because they taste good or have good functionality compared to the price, and because of the

emotional value of dieting healthily without stress compared to existing diets. It can be concluded that satisfaction with low-calorie foods leads to repurchase.

The practical implications of the results of this study are as follows. First, in order to increase consumer satisfaction and awareness of low-calorie foods, the taste, price, functional value, and emotional value of low-calorie foods must be understood. It is important to create an image of low-calorie food that takes advantage of the characteristics of taste, price, functional value, and emotional value, which are selection attributes that affect consumer satisfaction. Second, based on the results showing that customer satisfaction affects the purchase of low-calorie food due to the trend of healthy pleasure, improved taste and quality, diet food without mental stress, consumer psychology to follow the healthy pleasure trend, etc. This is considered to be an important factor. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that the food being sold is low-calorie and zero-calorie, and to psychologically market to consumers that it is relatively less fattening compared to other foods. Third, there is a need to continuously develop menus that stimulate consumer interest by taking advantage of the delicious yet healthy characteristics of low-calorie foods. To date, there are more and more low-calorie foods on the market. Many products, including alcohol, desserts, and beverages, are being released with the name Zero. More products should be released that have fewer calories than existing foods but are tasty so that consumers can diet safely and healthily in their daily lives without mental stress.

The overall conclusion is that low-calorie foods have risen rapidly as interest in dieting has increased since COVID-19. As shown in the results of this study, if low-calorie foods are marketed in consideration of taste, price, functional value, and emotional value, which influence consumer satisfaction and repurchase, it is expected to be competitive in the growing low-calorie and zero-calorie market.

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