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A Conceptual Framework of Raw Food Diet and Living Foods in Consumption Culture

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Abstract

The changes that come along with globalization in life styles are now evident in the tourism industry as well, and a variety of different diets have become available in the services provided by the industry. Further, eating and drinking habits, which differ according to the cultural features of their geography, are rapidly integrated into the existing consumption-driven concept. In this sense, this study discusses the raw food diet, which has been popular around the world, within a conceptual framework, provides an insight into different practices regarding live foods as well as the perception of the raw food diet in consumption culture.

Keywords

Living food • Live food • Raw food • Consumption • Consumption culture

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Introduction

The changes in economic, social and cultural areas due to globalization manifest themselves in eating and drinking habits as well (Özdinç, 2004); food and beverage companies and the services offered by these companies have been differentiated (Kivela and Crotts 2006; Doğdubay and Giritlioğlu, 2011). As a result of globalization, one's taste, desire, appreciation, pleasure, eating and drinking habits, palate, as well as linguistic concepts have transformed, which have an inevitable impact on touristic products, and eventually on more people every day. Indeed, this is evident from live food diets, recently attracting attention in the food culture, and the use of new concepts related to eating and drinking habits.

Live food is a concept used to describe the food and living food, which are served alive or half alive in different ways. The concept of live food refers to meat and its derivatives in Asian cuisine and to plants, fruits and vegetables, sprouted seeds in Western cuisine and it is used together with the concepts of fresh food and raw food (Cousens, 2003; Fry and Klein, 2004; Esquibel, 2007). It is remarkable that these concepts, utilized in world cuisines, have become common and can describe different types of foods. That being said, this study seeks to review ongoing international practices on live food and to evaluate the potential of live food as a touristic product, thus adding to the literature. To that end, the study first provides an understanding of the trend of raw food and the concept of living food and presents a literature review on practices on live food.

Literature Review

As an influence on consumer behaviour culture (You, O'Leary, Morrison and Hong, 2000) is a concept that includes material and spiritual values. Every society has a cultural structure of its own with the characteristics that can be learned, are transferable from one generation to the next, can change and meet the needs (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 2001; Güney, 2014). Therefore, a society's food culture is affected by way of life, geographical location, climate, mode of production, etc. as well as economic and technological developments, urbanization, mass media, migration and other cultures (Arslan, 1997; Türksöy, 2002, Ankeny, 2012; Albayrak, 2013). For that reason, how a society obtained the food that it has chosen, and where, when and how a society consumes this food vary according to social habits and culture. This cultural diversity is considered as interesting by tourists (Ganter, 2004; Sheldon and Fox, 1998).

Indeed, it would not be incorrect to say that due to developments and increased demands, gastronomy tourism emerged and grew into its current form (Boniface, 2003; Kivela and Crotts 2006; Albayrak, 2013). The urge to taste original flavours, to experience cultural food types and to observe how these foods are served in

place, creates considerable demand for destinations with culinary cultures (Hall and Mitchell, 2005; Okumuş, Okumuş and Mckercher, 2007). As a result of globalization, world cuisines with different presentations have spread to many countries and evolved into touristic products; with the increasing importance of food culture, gastronomic practices and values have become prominent (Kivela and Crofts 2006; Doğdubay and Giritlioğlu, 2011). Yet, values and understandings, behavioural patterns, eating habits may differ from culture to culture and impact each other; these cultural differences can even lead to conceptual confusions, clash of ideas, feelings of discomfort, moral and ethical considerations.

Based on a review of the related literature, it is evident that the number of studies on eating and drinking habits has been increasing (Nield, Kozak and LeGrays 2000; Tezcan, 2000; Long, 2004; Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Kivela and Crofts 2006; Kim, Kim, and Goh, 2011; Ankeny, 2012; Su, 2015) and more and more studies have focused on different types of diets in the recent years (Özdinç, 2004; Fox and Ward, 2008; Esquibel, 2010; Yurtseven and Kaya, 2011; Leitch, 2013; Kwon, Tamang, 2015; Yasemin, Son and Bulut, 2016; Dilek, 2017). The perception of and the demands for nutrition culture have diversified greatly, particularly due to differentiation in socio-economic level, educational status, different perspectives on life, ways of life. Thus, from a historical perspective, many changes have occurred from healthy eating to taking delight, from appealing to the eye and the taste buds to different and innovative practices, from fast food to slow food, to organic consumption, from fresh food to raw food, to live and semi live food diets, from food festivals to flavour and speed contests.

From Raw Food to Living Food

The raw food diet, nowadays preferred to maintain a healthy life, promotes the consumption of organic fruits and vegetables, germinated roots and living foods, which are mostly grown with animal fertilizers and not exposed to any chemicals (Havala, 2002; Cousens, 2003; Craig, 2004; Reid, 2006). This diet also includes the consumption of raw and uncooked, heated at low temperature (40 °C and below), unrefined, organic and sun dried foods. Therefore, this diet is considered as a type of the spiritual vegan diets and is occasionally used together with the concepts of live and semi live food diets and living foods (Howell, 1995; Cousens, 2005; Esquibel, 2007; Kyssa, 2009). Although the raw food diet is similar to vegan diets in terms of its goals and some of its practices, the way of consumption and the reasons for not consuming certain foods are different in these diets (Messina, Melina and Reed Mangels, 2003; Phillips, 2005; Esquibel, 2007; Vegetarian Society, 2016; Dilek, 2017). For instance, raw foodists are divided into three groups: those who do not eat meat, those who prefer eating raw but sauced meat, those who consume raw fish, mostly salmon (Koebnick, Strassner, Hoffmann ve Leitzmann, 1999; Leitzmann, 2014).

Today, the raw food diet is promoted as a way to become more resistant to diseases, to be an active person and maintain a healthy weight, and to have a good digestion (Howell, 1995; Cohen, 2004; Fry and Klein, 2004; Schenck, 2008; Knowler, 2010). Since one arguably gets all the enzymes, minerals, vitamins in the food by following the raw food diet. That being the case, the raw food diet has recently become a worldwide trend, although it has been long known by many, and achieved to attract a large number of people in numerous countries, mainly California, Canada, Spain, England (Cousens, 2005; Reid, 2006; Knowler, 2010; Leitzmann, 2014), including Turkey (Altıntaş, 2008; Ak, 2014; İnce, 2016). As a result, new debates have emerged around the positive and negative effects of cooked food, whether foods should be cooked or not, the benefits and risks of the raw food diet, different eating and drinking habits around the world (Howell, 1995; Korthals, 2015; Wanjek, 2013). Thus, through various scientific studies, diet programs, trainings on nutrition, certificate programs are organized, and new restaurants are opened, raw foods are included to menus, and the number of personal blogs about touristic experiences is increased; also, new groups on social media are created and numerous communities from different countries gather.

It is evident that scientific studies provide a different insight into spiritual diets paradigm (Rojek, 2003; Cousens, 2005; Schenck, 2008, Kyssa, 2009) and that this diet and other diets of similar nature have gradually evolved into a philosophy of life around the world (Living and Raw Foods, 1998; Fox and Ward, 2008; Esquibel, 2010; Living Foods Institute, 2016; Ross, 2016; Oflaz, 2017). The change in diets in Turkey, as well as other countries, has been covered in the news and suggestions about the diet are made based on expert opinions, which indicates the current and future situation of the raw food trend and consumption culture. In this sense, these developments may be associated with the desire of people, who are exposed to overconsumption, to overcome certain negativities such as malnutrition, stress, health problems, etc. and to love themselves, to be together with nature, to realize, and to abstain from a commoditized life full of consumption.

Perception and Practices of Live Food

Modern societies relying on a consumer culture (Baudrillard, 1997) demand more as they consume and seek for different products. Such search can lead to novel products and services, but also bring about certain negativities caused by this understanding of consumption. It is observed that forward-looking consumption can also revive previous practices (Duman, 2014). The prominent presence of consumption cycle in every area of life has an impact on people, and the urge to overconsume makes it more difficult to be healthy, to be happy with and satisfied with what one has. After all, as one fulfils his/her wishes and desires, the cycle would start all over again (Baudrillard, 1997; Bauman, 1999). Trapped in a vicious cycle, some people follow a

lifestyle of their own choice in order to maintain their health and to be active. One of the resulting diets is the raw food diet, which is an active and healthy life philosophy.

The term of living food is used to express the fact that food are high in energy for life and have a noticeable effect on body. The idea that the nutrients required by the body for a healthy life can be met by different foods (substitution products) and similar tastes can be created and the relevant practices are adopted in the vegan diet as well as this lifestyle. So, the concept of live food in the raw food diet is not considered as the consumption of live animals (Cousens, 2005; Reid, 2006); instead, this diet avoids the consumption of any live animals. Yet, the concept of live food also indicates different culinary cultures with eating and drinking habits including certain practices which serve animals alive or half alive (Demetriou 2008; Su, 2015; Tomlinson, Akbar and Pickles, 2016; Liao and Meskin; n.d.) In the Eastern Asian culinary culture, “*Live Food*” refers to a cuisine where animals, which are alive and half alive with still active nerves, are served.

Practices involving live foods are available in Chinese, Thai, Korean, Japanese cuisines; these foods are daily consumed and also served as a touristic product at restaurants, and festivals for live food practices as well as flavour and speed contests are organized in these countries. With globalization, this understanding of food culture has spread to many areas in the world through mass media and tourism activities. Many species varying from live octopus in Korean cuisine (Sannakji), raw-live fish in Japanese cuisine (ikizukuri- live sashimi, fugu), partially fried half-alive fish in Chinese cuisine (yin-yang) to shellfish (lobster, shrimp, mussels, oysters, sea urchins, etc.), reptiles, insects, cats, dogs, monkeys, frogs, turtles in the food chain of this cultural structure (Demetriou, 2008; Sashimi, 2014; Pollack, 2015). Although these foods are not usually preferred in Turkey due to various reasons, it is reported that they affect eating habits, create similar foods, evolve into touristic products, and have the potential to be one of the new products in menus, following raw fish served with seasoning in world cuisines, such as “ceviche” and “poke”, and sushi, octopus, lobster, etc. (Bozok, 2016).

The consumption of the living, for the sake of lasting feelings such as flavour, pleasure, prestige, has become a matter of debate, and a campaign titled “*Stop Cooking Live Animal*” on Change.com and a campaign titled “*Live Sushi or “İkizukuri*” by Occupy for Animals were launched to raise awareness and to challenge this consumption culture. It is remarkable that similar campaigns have appeared and been criticized in the press and social media; even animal rights defenders raised their voice and such campaigns have been addressed in the literature too (Demetriou 2008; Bird, 2013; Tomlinson, Akbar and Pickles, 2016; Dilek, 2017). The live food cultures, which have been lately prominent, was discussed by Liao and Meskin (n.d.) in terms

of their moral and aesthetic dimension. In this sense, serving fresh food was associated with aesthetic and the food, which are alive during preparation and consumption, contrast sharply with morality. The increase in world population, the current status of consumption culture, the commodification in tourism activities have become more evident day by day. In conclusion, unethical production in a wide range of products from poultry to culture fish and consumption and service network differentiated the diet and life style of many people, changed their values and understanding.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Values and understanding, which have become an object of consumption with the effect of capitalism (Aytaç, 2006) as well as unlimited services are now prevalent in many areas of tourism. The modern societies based on a consumer culture (Baudrillard, 1997), the creation of more differences, and the desire of consumers in search of innovation for different products and services lead to the fact that this understanding of consumption is adopted by more people. Because the individuals exposed to consumption in every area are prompted to consume rapidly without thinking and criticizing. For that reason, a consumer culture has become common in tourism activities and the spare time, which is supposed to be of significance, has been given a commoditized and consumptional dimension. There are some changes in the steps taken to meet the needs, different production and consumption habits and controls over consumer needs through the services provided. As stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, food is a physiological need and as long as it is met, it stimulates other needs. In this sense, according to views and critiques, it should be properly questioned whether the consumption of alive and half alive animals to present a more delicious meat is a need or not. Also, it would be useful to consider the effect of the drive for status and prestige in order to determine which level in the hierarchy of needs should include the desire for such consumption. Since, in today's consumption structure, animals are either included in food chain or medical, cosmetic fields, etc. The commodification of animals and the consumption of alive or half alive animals, and the use of animals as a touristic product, which eventually causes them suffer or die, should not be overlooked in tourism sector, which is most affected by the deterioration of ecological balance and where automation is minimum and human relations and emotion management is maximum. Therefore, the adoption of the idea of happy food and happy animals is an important step in transition from a consumer perspective to an inventor one. As, it should be emphasized that when a society, who are get used to what is going on and indifferent to others' feelings and simply want to consume the moment, consumes, it is exhausted.

Indeed, increasing practices on live food, which is presented as a touristic attraction in Asian cuisine or promoted in contents and festivals, call for the consideration of touristic products in terms of ethics and animal rights. Hence, with enhanced awareness

towards practices on live food, the suffering of animals in consumption structure is criticized in terms of ethics. Despite its consumption culture, Taiwan is the first Asian country to adopt a draft law that prohibits the consumption and sale of cat and dog meat, which is a significant indicator for changing attitudes in consumption and increased focus on animal rights. Because, tourists are no longer interested in simply consuming products and services; they are also interested in understanding how these products and services are provided. For that reason, when the consumption of a product or service revokes the right of another creature to life or harms the world, tourists consider that as a reasonable reason to distance themselves from destinations and the presentation of alive or half alive animals as food might make it worse. Thus, it seems that even the idea of consuming live food conflicts with the existing ethical codes in Turkey. That said, further studies may focus on such developments in eating and drinking habits individually in terms of producers and consumers. Such studies may scrutinize eating and drinking enterprises, the outcomes of preparing menus for a raw food diet on the existing customer portfolio, the establishment of a potential market. Another proposed area of research is the perspective of consumers towards a raw food diet and purchase intention as well as opinions about practices on live foods as a touristic product.

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