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International consumer insights into the desires and barriers of diners in choosing healthy restaurant meals

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Overweight and obesity are global public-health problems and unhealthy restaurant meals have been identified as one contributing factor. Given the increase in restaurant meals and the number of restaurants throughout the world, programs that can help chefs and operators to produce healthy meals can have a large public health impact. Unilever Food Solutions has rolled out a Seductive Nutrition™ programme to help chefs develop effective programs to provide healthier restaurant meals. However, to take this further, an understanding of diner's desire for healthier menu items and the barriers faced in choosing healthier meals is required. As such we conducted an international study to identify these barriers and needs. A cohort of restaurant diners was recruited from ten countries: United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and China (n=5,000, aged 18-65 years). Participants completed a comprehensive questionnaire. Globally, 82% of diners were not completely satisfied with current healthy options. The top 3 small changes that these diners wanted to see included on restaurant menus to make them healthier included: steamed, baked or grilled instead of fried foods, fresh ingredients used, and served with plenty of vegetables. Taste, price and satiation were seen as key barriers to current healthy options. Diners had clear preferences for when they wanted to see healthy items on the menu in terms of time of day, time of the week and occasion. Nutritionists, dietitians, chefs and managers can leverage these insights to provide healthier and appealing meals.

Biography

Nicole Neufingerl has completed her MSc of Nutrition & Health at Wageningen University in 2006. As nutrition & health scientist, she has been working at Unilever R&D for 10 years on a range of topics related to dietary intake and behaviour as well as out of home consumption, particularly in children and older adults. She conducts literature reviews, intervention and observational studies and surveys, which have been published in international peer reviewed scientific journals.

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